

Special COLLECTOR'S EDITION
A FOOD LOVER'S GUIDE TO THE LONE STAR STATE
SAVEUR
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Juicy and Tender Mesquite-Grilled Steak
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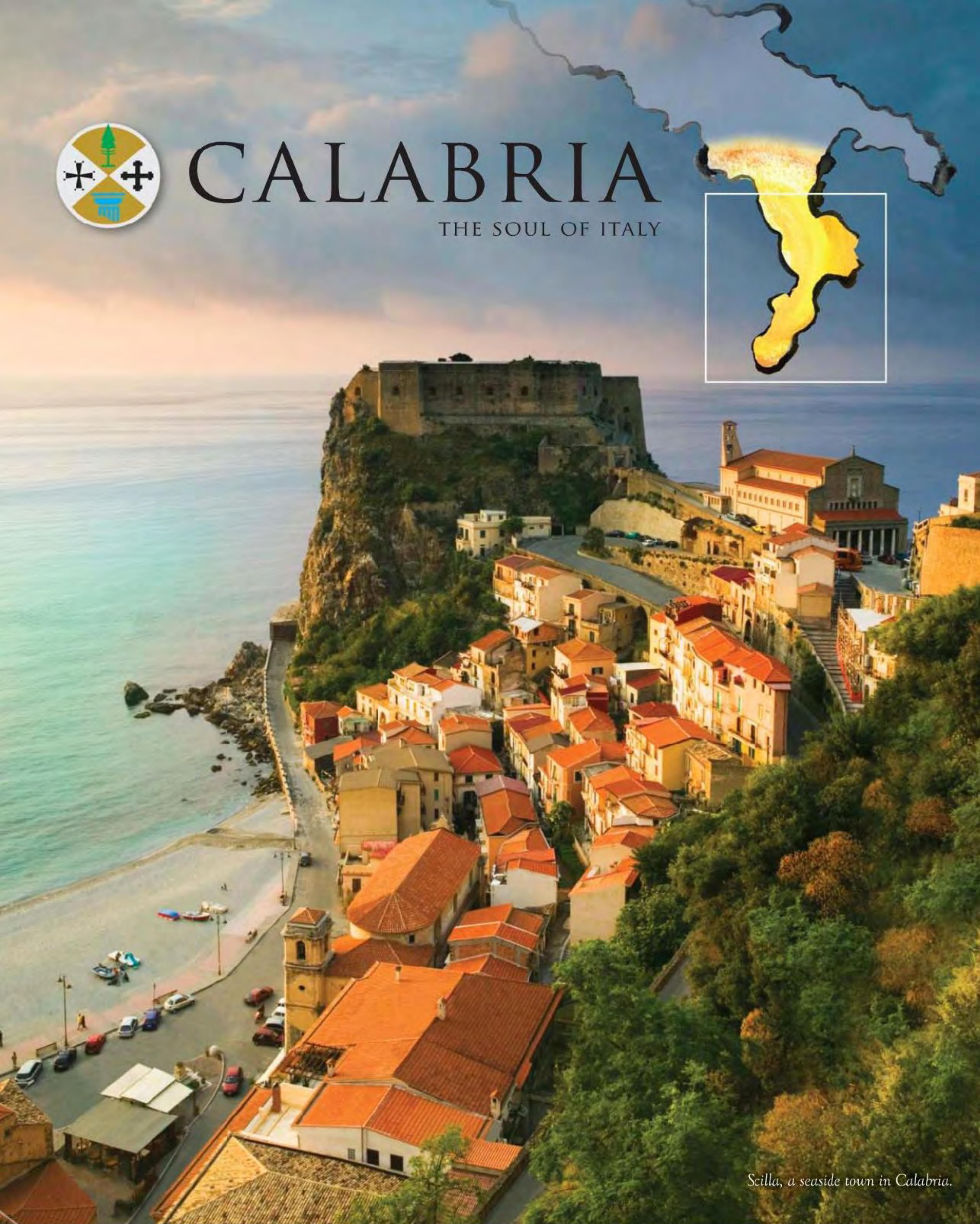

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SAVEUR

SPECIAL ISSUE

24 Reasons Why We Love Texas

We're so smitten with the Lone Star State that we've decided to count the ways. That's no easy feat, because when it comes to food, Texas has it all: open-range cowboy cooking (see page 72); game-changing vanguard chefs (page 24); home cooks who work wonders with local ingredients (page 42); passionate urban farmers (page 62); some of the world's best barbecue (see page 52); and more. You'll also find great recipes (page 81) and an opinionated guide (page 76) to our favorite places to eat and sleep.


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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS (2); JRC, INC./ALAMY; LANDON NORDEMAN; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

Cover *Cowboy rib eye.* PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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RECIPES

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FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2); PENNY DE LOS SANTOS


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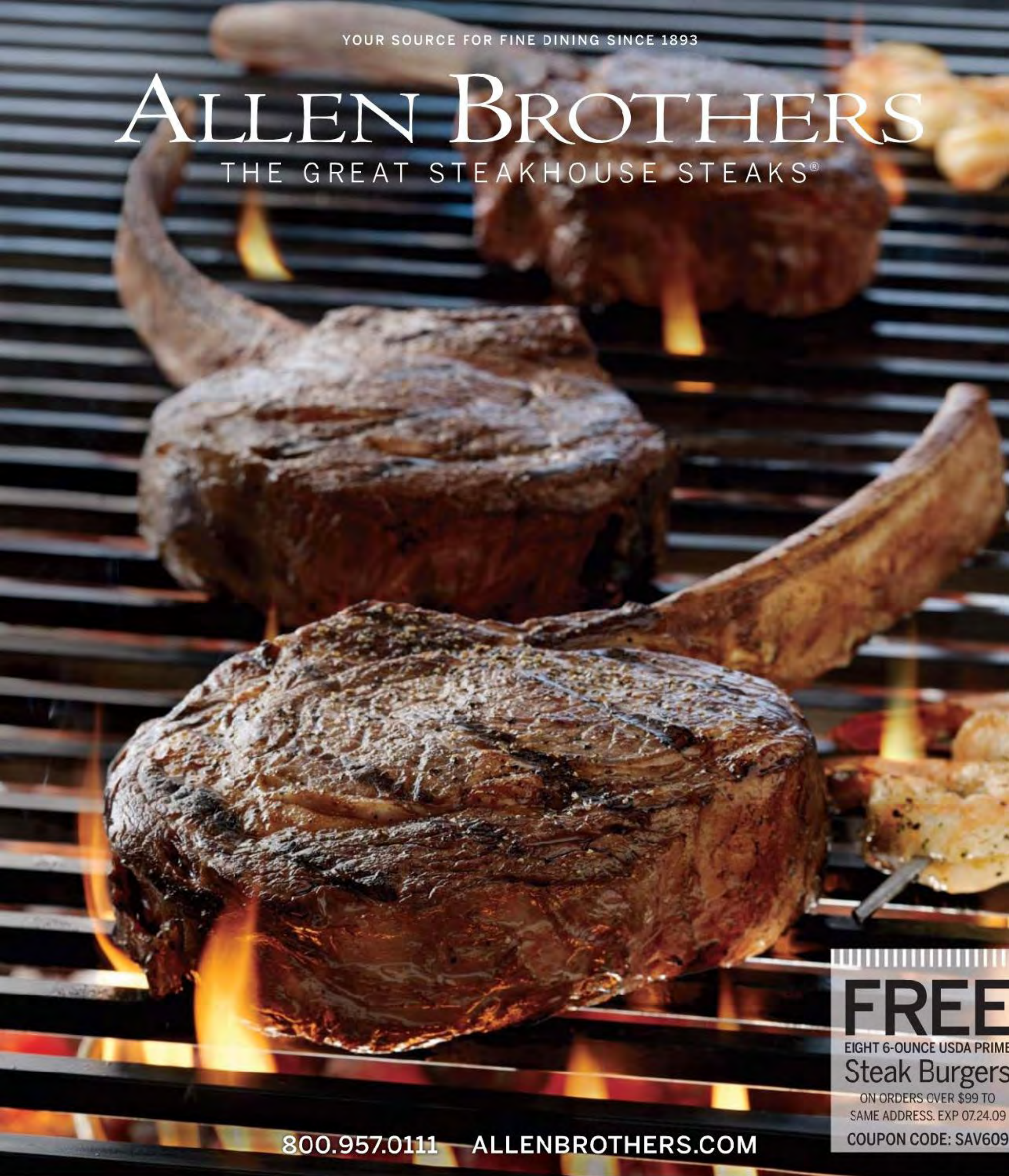
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This Month at SAVEUR.COM

This month at SAVEUR.COM you'll find a Q & A with Whole Foods founder John Mackey; recipes for desserts from the Lone Star State, including Stephan Pyles's decadent Heaven and Hell cake; food memories from famous Texans; profiles of innovative spirits distillers; a gallery of our favorite El Paso eats; a recipe for crab-stuffed jalapeños; and many other exclusive online features.

Discover delicious dishes in the SAVEUR recipe files.



ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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FIRST

Thank You, Tex-perts

Lucky for us, Texans don't keep good things to themselves

IT WAS HARD SOMETIMES, over the year we spent putting together this issue devoted to Texas, not to hear that old commercial for Pace Picante Sauce running through our heads. Broadcast nationwide in the '80s—when Pace Picante was still made in San Antonio—the ad featured a crew of cowboys telling off their chuck wagon cook. His crime? Using a picante sauce made in (gasp) New York City. It ended with one of them growling, "Get a rope."

Texans have strong feelings about their food; fortunately for us, one of them is tremendous pride. As we planned this issue, many Texans acted as enthusiastic guides. It began with a gonzo journey through Houston's food scene, led by one of our favorite writers, Robb Walsh, of the *Houston Press* editor-in-chief, James Oseland, returned from that trip fired up. "Banh mi, Tex-Mex—man, that city knows how to eat!" he told us back in the office. From that moment, this issue was an inevitability. We all had to go to Texas ourselves.



Robb continued to act as adviser as the months progressed, on subjects ranging from chicken fried steak (see his take on it on page 17) to vaquero cooking (page 72). Food historian and native Texan Sharon Hudgins played a similar role. Her fascinating article on chuck wagons (page 36) became a sort of compass for navigating the rich history of Texas foods. One of our staunchest allies was Patricia Sharpe, of *Texas Monthly*, who brought us up to date on chefs to watch (page 24) and contemporary dining, of both the white-tablecloth and plastic-fork varieties (see her church barbecue story on page 52).

Pat also connected us with some of the Texan writers whose words fill the pages that follow and whose work (for publications like the ones pictured here) we'd admired for years.

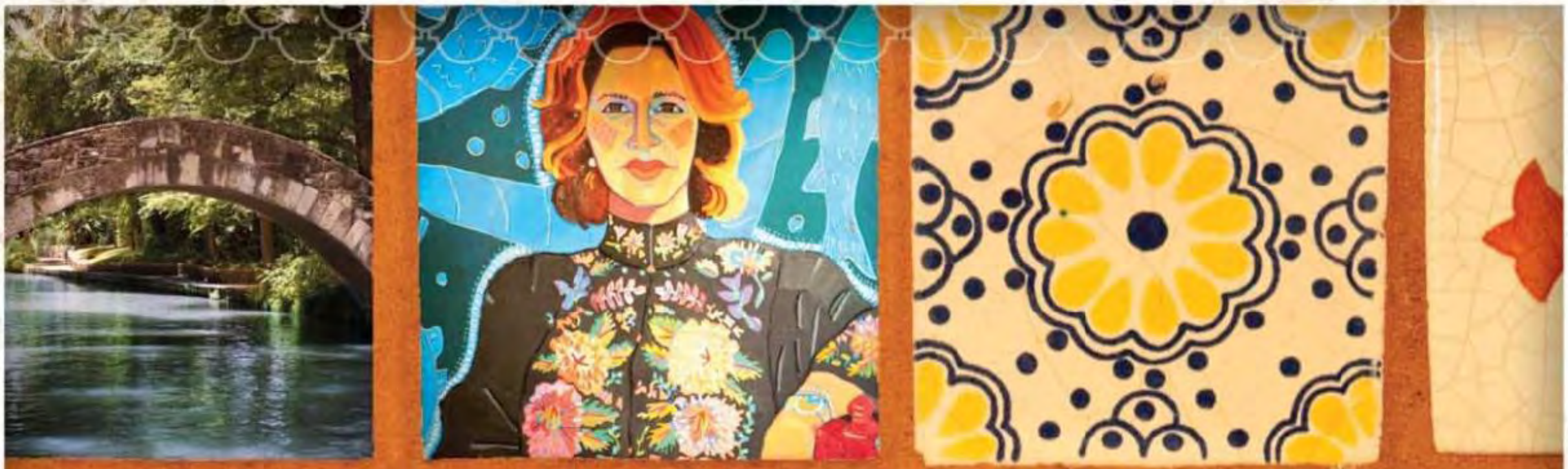
The truth is, I've always been a little obsessed with Texas. I narrowly missed being a Texan, in fact. Early in their marriage, my parents moved from Chicago to Conroe, outside Houston. They left the state before I came along, but I grew up on their stories about Texas, many of which involved falling in love with spicy, exciting new foods. Finally, in my 20s, I moved to Austin and explored the highways and foodways of Texas for myself.

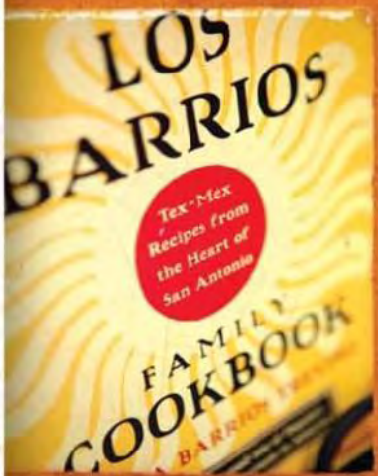
Since moving to New York, I've had a big, Texas-shaped hole in my belly. What a gift it was to be able to head back to do research (i.e., eating), as we all did for this issue. The high point for me was my visit to El Paso (see page 42); the families I met there welcomed me into their kitchens and their lives. If there's a trait I would point to as quintessentially Texan, it's that supersize hospitality. They sure don't do it that way in New York City, or anywhere else, for that matter, outside the great state of Texas. —*BETH KRACKLAUER, Senior Editor*



Here's to Breakfast! *The American Society of Magazine Editors named* SAVEUR*'s October edition the best single-topic issue of 2008. It's our fourth ASME award. Hurray!*

ABOVE: MICHAEL KRAUS







FROM THIS FAMILY KITCHEN,
STORIES, LIFE AND LAUGHTER
flow like the river.

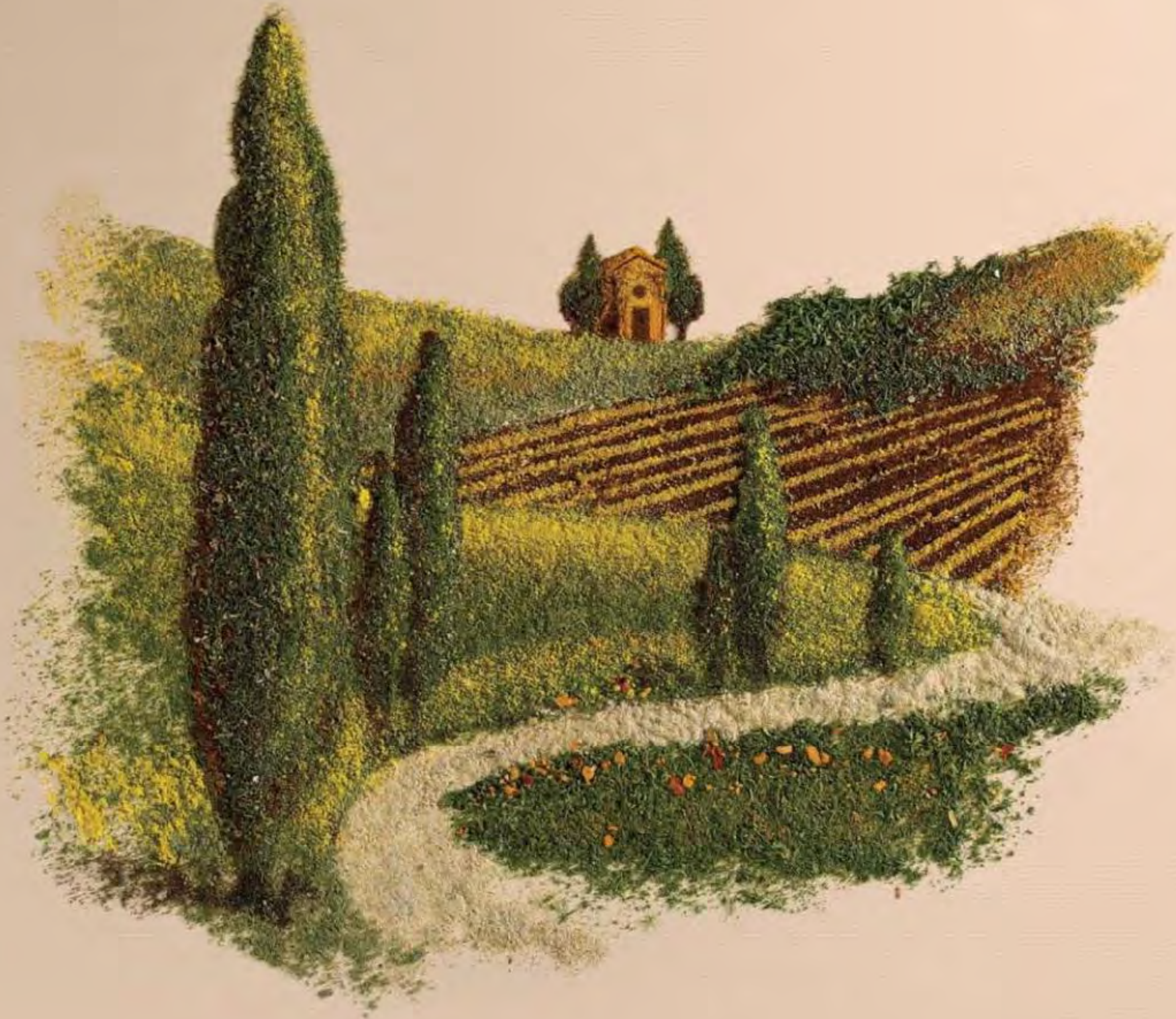
Not every chef guards her treasured family recipes. Diana Barrios graciously shares the ingredients of her family's success with a world far beyond Los Barrios, a renowned home base for Tex-Mex cuisine. With a popular cookbook and meals long-remembered by contented newcomers and restaurant regulars alike, she is at the heart of this living tribute to a family's beloved mother with every meal served warmly from a true family kitchen. Sometimes when you take a page from a family cookbook, you find a story that moves you. Deep. In the heart.



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FARE

Memories and Marvels from the World of Texas Food, plus Agenda and More



Steak in Paradise

THE BEST CHICKEN FRIED STEAK in Paradise looked as if it were covered in corn flakes, and it came with peppery cream gravy on the side. It was the third steak I'd finished at the Finish Line Café in Paradise, Texas, and the folks at the next table were starting to shoot me strange looks.

What had brought me to the Finish Line was not just a deep love for CFS (as the dish is often called here in Texas) but also a strong hunch. Driving around the state researching an article about chicken fried steak for the *Houston Press*, I'd begun to suspect that you could get a great version in just about any small-town café west of Dallas and north of Waco—an area of Texas I'd come to dub the Chicken Fried Steak Belt. I decided to test this theory by picking a random town along my planned route. Paradise (population 519) sounded like as good a spot as any, and the Finish Line Café (whose drive-through window is pictured above) was the most popular place in town. I would soon learn that three generations of women run the Finish Line: waitress Jenny Herrington is the daughter of the owner and head cook, Rayanne Gentry, whose own mother, Marie Brown, also works in the kitchen. Each woman has a different idea about chicken fried steak.

There are three categories of CFS in Texas: German, cowboy, and Southern. Each style

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI



CHICKEN FRIED STEAK

SERVES 4

- 2 cups plus 3 tbsp. flour
- 2 tsp. paprika
- Freshly ground black pepper and kosher salt, to taste
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 tsp. Tabasco, plus more to taste
- 1 egg
- 4 4–6-oz. cube steaks, pounded to ¼" thickness
- Canola oil, for frying
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 cups milk

1. Heat oven to 200°; put a baking sheet fitted with a rack inside. In a shallow dish, whisk together 2 cups flour, paprika, pepper, and salt. In another dish, whisk together buttermilk, 1 tsp. Tabasco, and egg. Season steaks with salt and pepper. Working with one steak at a time, dredge in flour mixture, then egg mixture, and again in flour; shake off excess. Transfer to plate.

2. Pour oil into a 12" cast-iron skillet to a depth of ½"; heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 320°. Working in 2 batches, fry steaks, flipping once, until golden brown, 6–8 minutes. Place steaks on rack in oven to keep warm.

3. Melt butter in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Whisk in remaining flour; cook until golden, 1–2 minutes. Whisk in milk; cook, whisking, until thick. Season with Tabasco and salt and pepper. Serve steaks with gravy.

has its proponents who believe it's the original. According to Jane and Michael Stern's book *Eat Your Way Across the U.S.A.* (Broadway Books, 1997), "the chicken-fried steak was a Depression-era invention of Hill Country German-Texans". German-style CFS is made of pounded-thin beef cube steak, dredged in bread crumbs or cracker meal and fried crisp like schnitzel.

The cowboy version is often called a pan-fried steak in West Texas, where it's the most popular. It's said that chuck wagon cooks, who tenderized their steaks by beating them with anything handy, would simply dredge them in flour before frying them to a crisp.

Southern-style CFS has a thick, crunchy crust that looks like the coating on a piece of Southern fried chicken. It's the most commonly found in East Texas, where cotton plantations thrived before the Civil War. In claiming this rich style as the original, adherents have the advantage of pointing to the word *chicken* in CFS's name and to the cookbooks dating all the way back to the early 1800s that contain recipes for cutlets dredged in flour and dipped in egg batter.

There was a CFS sandwich and a pan-fried steak on the Finish Line's menu. The latter, a juicy cube steak with a flavorful crust and a side of creamy gravy, was a beautiful thing. That there even was a third steak came as a surprise: noting my unusual interest in CFS, Jenny Herrington suggested that I try her grandmother's version. To make this off-menu variety, Ms. Brown dredges her steak in seasoned flour, then in a batter of eggs and buttermilk, then in the flour again.

With an awesome, ripply crust that shattered when I bit through to the tender steak, Granny's version turned out to be a solid example of a classic Southern-style CFS, and the clear winner. —*Robb Walsh*

AGENDA: TEXAS



JUNE

19

ANNUAL JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

This holiday commemorates the day in 1865 when Union soldiers in Galveston declared that Texas's slaves were free. Ever since, Texans have come together each year to celebrate, in homes and public places, over spreads of Southern dishes and bottles of candy-sweet red soda water, a longtime favorite known throughout Texas (these days, usually under the brand name Big Red).

JUNE

25–28

56TH ANNUAL WATERMELON THUMP

Luling

Aside from the opportunity to savor slices of the festival's eponymous summertime fruit, the real highlight of the Watermelon Thump is its world championship seed-spitting contest. At this year's event, watch 30 competitors try to beat the 1989 record: 68 feet, nine and one-eighth inches. Information: www.watermelonthump.com.

JULY

4

HISTORIC AVERY TOMATO FESTIVAL

Avery

Twelve thousand tomato aficionados are expected to roll in to Avery (population 462) this year to feast on all manner of preparations of the local cash crop, from fried green tomatoes and salsa to red tomato ice cream and tangy, sweet green tomato cake, a Southern specialty eaten for breakfast or dessert. Information: 903/244-3920.

SEPTEMBER

4–7

TEXAS POTJIE FESTIVAL

Rusk

A *potjie* is a three-legged cast-iron pot (similar to a dutch oven) of the kind that South African immigrants have brought to Texas over the past 25 years. Food cooked in *potjies* is this annual event's main attraction. The featured dishes include boerewors, a grilled beef and pork sausage, and potjiekos, a spicy meat stew. Information: www.texaspotjie.com.





SEPTEMBER

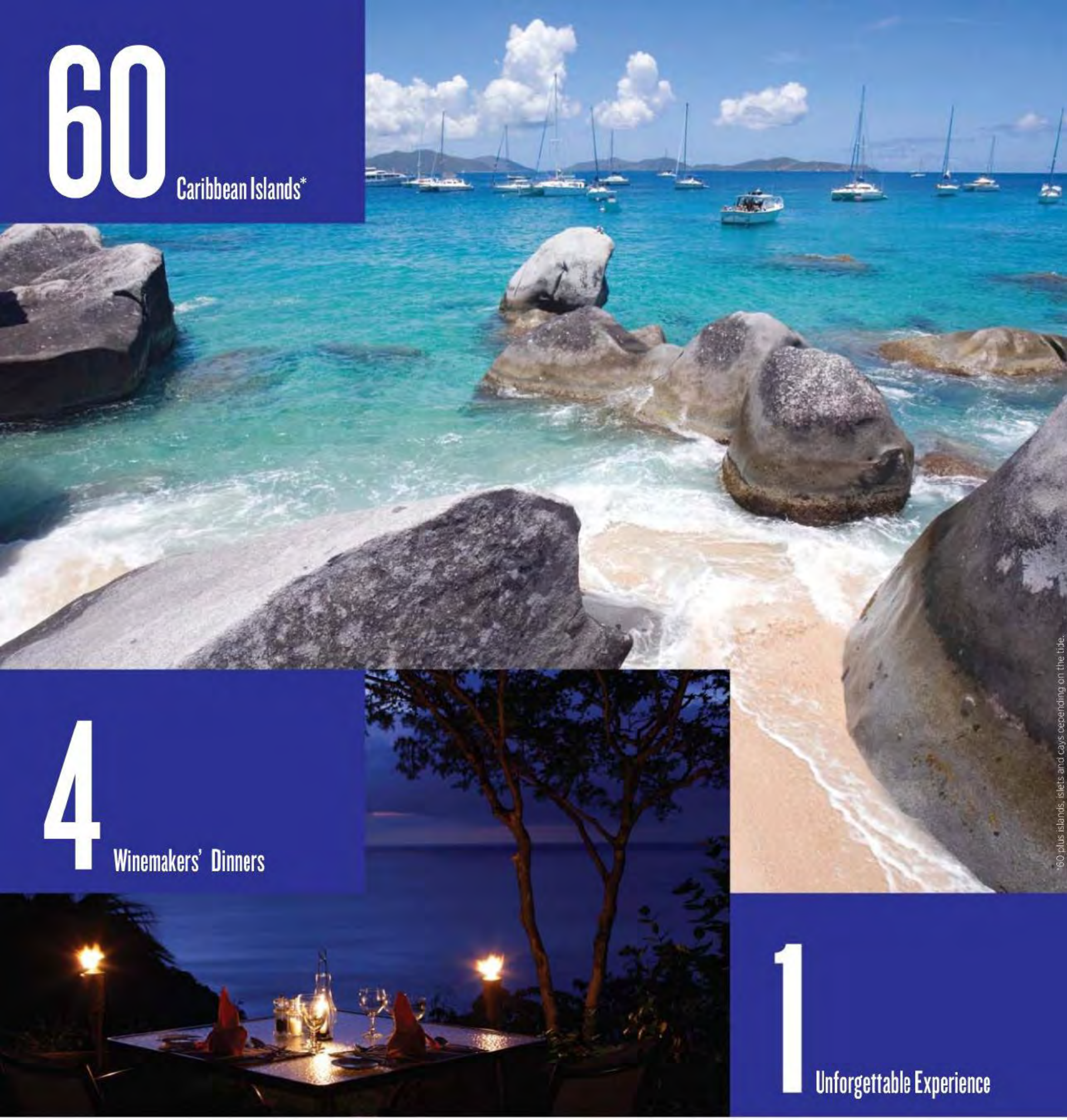
25

Opening Day:
STATE FAIR OF TEXAS

Dallas

Chicken fried bacon, deep-fried banana splits, deep-fried grilled cheese sandwiches, deep-fried jelly beans, deep-fried jalapeño gorditas, deep-fried Moon Pies, chocolate-covered strawberry waffle balls, strawberry cheesecake shooters—and nearly a whole month to try them all. What more do you need to know? Information: www.bigtex.com.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; FREDRIK RENANDER/ALAMY; B. G. WILSON FOOD/ALAMY; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS


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Caribbean Islands*
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Winemakers' Dinners
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FARE



Caviar and Pearls

If we had to pick one food that sums up everything we love about Texas, it wouldn't be barbecue or a good Tex-Mex platter, though we adore those Lone Star specialties. It would be the elegant yet simple salad known as Texas caviar: black-eyed peas, minced onion, and garlic marinated with oil and vinegar. That dish, invented in 1940 by the chef Helen Corbitt, evokes a significant moment in Texas cooking, when cooks helped usher the state into the gourmet era—not by slavishly imitating the ways of cities in the North but by using the ingredients at hand. Like "Texas tea", as crude oil has been called, the salad's name invokes a symbol of sophistication but does so with a wink that seems to say, "We do things differently here." Oddly enough, Corbitt wasn't a Texan. She was a New Yorker who moved to Austin in 1940 to take a position as an instructor in restaurant management at the University of Texas. Two weeks into the job, writes Patty Vineyard MacDonald in *The Best of Helen Corbitt's Kitchens* (University of North Texas Press, 2000), Corbitt was asked to cater a dinner using only locally available products. The high-end staples she had long relied on—caviar, hearts of palm, and so on—were nowhere to be found in Austin at the time, so she made do with the local ingredients, including those sensational black-eyed peas. Corbitt would go on to become one of the most influential figures in Texas culinary history; between 1957 and her death, in 1978, she penned five cookbooks that have become Texas home cooks' standards, and she managed the kitchens of some of the state's best country clubs, hotels, and department stores, including Neiman-Marcus, the Dallas-based retailer, where she worked for 14 years. To Corbitt, all Texas ingredients needed—whether it was Rio Grande Valley grapefruit, which she featured in a salad with poppyseed vinaigrette, or West Texas pecans tossed with sherry and crumbled over a casserole of sweet potatoes—was a little fancy flourish and, in the case of the caviar, a catchy name. —*Cheryl and Bill Jamison*

Still Shining

Like many of the German and Czech immigrants who settled in Texas during the mid-19th century, Kosmos Spoetzl arrived thirsty. Nearly a century after he began brewing beer in the small, southeastern town of Shiner, his bock—a traditional, malty style—is a Lone Star State icon. Though Shiner Bock has become one of the best-selling craft brews in the nation, the brewery Spoetzl founded remains true to its roots. Gearing up for Spoetzl Brewery's 2009 centennial, brewmaster Jimmy Mauric (pictured, below), who has worked there for 32 years, recently introduced a few varieties you'd be hard-pressed to find outside of central Europe: a märzen ale, historically served during Oktoberfest; a Bohemian black



lager; a helles (bright) lager made with spicy hops. Our favorite is the full-bodied Shiner 100 Commemorator, a style of starkbier (strong beer) invented by German monks to sustain them while fasting. Somewhere, Kosmos Spoetzl is smiling. —*Beth Kracklauer*

LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; RIGHT: LANDON NORDEMAN


BEST FRIEND
GRANDPA'S WATCH
OLD JEANS


BLACKSTONE
WINERY
Merlot
CALIFORNIA

Manhattan, Texas

I'LL BE THE FIRST to admit that Texans take an inordinate amount of pride in their state, and none more so than we homesick expatriates. Having hung my hat in New York City since 1995, I know the hardships of the Tex-pat, and whenever I get together with fellow Texans in New York, we always end up commiserating about the same old thing: the food.

Don't get me wrong; I love my adopted city, but there are certain things we Texans just can't abide—like the so-called Tex-Mex restaurant in my neighborhood that makes its chile con queso with swiss cheese and bell peppers instead of Velveeta and Ro★Tel brand canned green chiles and tomatoes. And then there's the breakfast spot uptown that served me scrambled eggs with a side of ranch dressing and called it huevos rancheros. Don't get me started.

Over the years, I've taken matters into my own hands. One cold October evening, I invited some friends, both Texans and non-Texans, over for chili, intended to warm body and soul. The Texans were impressed with my concoction of cubed chuck roast, garlic, onions, and seven varieties of fiery red chile pepper that I'd hunted down earlier that day at a Mexican market in Queens. The non-Texans, however, were nonplussed. I'd warned them this wasn't your bowl of chili à la Wendy's. But if they weren't flapping their hands in front of their mouths saying, "Why is this so hot?" they were inspecting their bowls for those elusive beans, even after I told them that Texas chili doesn't have them. Why don't they get it?

Food memories from famous Texans at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE121

To ease my homesickness, I recently started a blog. It's called Homesick Texan, and it obsessively chronicles the meals I make in my tiny New York kitchen: carne guisada tacos like the ones I used to buy from an Airstream trailer in Austin; Frito pie like the one we used to get at football games; King Ranch chicken, a creamy tortilla, tomato, and cheese–laden casserole named for the legendary South Texas ranch staked out in 1853 by Captain Richard King; meringue-topped chocolate pie like my grandmother's; and so on. Tex-pats from all over the world post comments about their culinary lives in exile and, in some cases, their glorious homecomings: "I lived outside of Texas for four years," one woman wrote, "and there was no Ro★Tel, no queso, and they tried to tell me that chilaquiles are migas. So I moved back home. Life is good again."



The author at her great-grandmother's house, savoring a slice of real Texas pecan pie.

Me? I'm doing my best to bloom where I've been planted, and I've gotten pretty good at re-creating the food I miss and adore. I have to say, though, that when you take the food out of Texas, you always take a little Texas out of the food. —*Lisa Fain*

One Good Bottle Viognier, a grape that produces aromatic white wines in its native France, has a surprising affinity for the loamy, russet-colored dirt of the Texas High Plains. That's where Becker Vineyards makes its award-winning Texas Viognier ($14.95), a wine with ripe peach and floral aromas, all balanced with a bright acidity that stands up to curries and even Texas barbecue. Becker makes other excellent wines—including a delicious blend of carignane, mourvèdre, syrah, and grenache bottled under the name Prairie Rotie—but for me the sunny viognier captures better than any wine I know the essence of a laid-back Texas summer day. Not enough of an accolade for you? Then ask the opinion of Texas governor Rick Perry and his wife, Anita: Texas Viognier is one of their favorites. (See THE PANTRY, page 108, for sources for Texas cheese, beer, and wine.) —*Liz Pearson*



FROM TOP: COURTESY LISA FAIN; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

LIST

6 Texas Tastemakers

Presenting a few of our favorite Lone Star State chefs

TEXAS HAS ALWAYS LAID CLAIM to one of the most exciting restaurant cultures in the country, thanks to the pioneering spirit that distinguishes its most talented chefs. The scene is constantly evolving: Dallas used to be the locus of high-end eating, while the more rollicking Houston—a port city and magnet for immigrants—was far richer in casual and ethnic fare. Nowadays, though, virtually all the state's major cities boast a few bright stars who borrow freely from Texas's vast cultural grab bag and bounteous local larder. (See "The Guide", page 76, for descriptions of some our favorite places.) Here are six visionary chefs whose cooking is worth traveling for.

① **Bryan Caswell** The 36-year-old chef at Reef, in Houston, is redefining Gulf Coast cuisine, knitting together existing strands of Louisianan, Mexican, Southern, and Texan cookery with contributions from the city's Vietnamese, Thai, Indian, and Filipino immigrants. The result is a seafood restaurant that's exuberantly Houstonian, where oysters rockefeller come with local chard and Indian lime pickle, and pan-roasted grouper turns soulful with pecan–shallot cracklings. Caswell, a keen fisherman who is seldom seen without his Astros cap, has also heightened locals' interest in neglected Gulf species. If cobia, amberjack, and sheepshead are all the rage in Houston these days, the trend can be traced to Reef's doorstep. —*Alison Cook*

② **Tyson Cole** Cole wasn't popular when he started working in Austin sushi bars at the age of 23. "Customers were like, 'Are *you* going to make the sushi? I would much rather *that* guy make it because he's Japanese,'" he recalls. Not one to be easily thwarted, Cole eventually started making trips to Japan, where he learned the language and picked up some impressive knife skills. His first restaurant, the madly innovative and successful Uchi, opened in a revamped south Austin cottage in 2003 and wowed diners with such groundbreaking pairings as scorpionfish with wild strawberries, golden beets, lemon verbena, and rhubarb. His second venture is its more experimental sibling Uchiko, which is due to open next spring. Austinites are hoping that he'll hurry up. —*Patricia Sharpe*

③ **Robert Del Grande** When Del Grande opened Houston's now legendary Cafe Annie, nearly 30 years ago, he completely changed the way that city's diners thought about local ingredients. Suddenly Gulf blue crab was stuffed into tostadas, and black beans were layered with goat cheese in a terrine. (That latter dish became so popular that regulars threatened to bolt if Del Grande took it off the menu.) The chef eagerly and openly looked to his Hispanic line cooks and crew for inspiration; the restaurant's many moles prove that point. What we love the most about Del Grande, though, is that he's not your typical chef turned restaurateur. Though he and his business partners oversee a half dozen restaurant projects (including the coming redo of Cafe Annie, which will soon be reborn as the grill-centric Restaurant RDG Bar Annie), he can often be found in one of his kitchens, cooking up a storm. —*A.C.*

④ **Dean Fearing** You may know Fearing as one of the fathers of New Southwestern cuisine, but did you know that he plays the guitar in a popular alternative country band called the Barbwires, with Robert Del Grande (see above)? Or that he spends his days off visiting his producers' farms with his two kids? Fearing, the lanky, French-trained chef who worked at the Mansion on Turtle Creek for 20 years, never fails to surprise us. First it was dishes that drew on his folksy Southern upbringing, like fried chicken with mashed potatoes and green beans; then it was his Southwestern signatures, like the velvety tortilla soup studded with chicken and avocado. His latest shocker? Fearing's, a lavish, two-year-old venue in the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Fearing continues to traffic in the smoky, deep flavors of the Southwest, but he's added a few Asian twists along the way: these days, for example, his barbecued shrimp taco comes with a pickled red onion and mango salad. —*A.C.*

⑤ **Monica Pope** The chef-owner of Houston's T'afia has done more than perhaps any other Texas chef to spur the use of local and traditional ingredients. "We're renegades," she says of Texas cooks. "We want to cook from wherever we find ourselves, and Texas is the only place we want to be." Pope (pictured on facing page) taps into her fans' regional pride by hosting a farmers' market each Saturday in T'afia's parking lot and cooking classes in its kitchen. In the process of ferreting out growers and ranchers, she has given her global, eclectic menu a more distinctly local cast: consider her wild Gulf shrimp salad with cabbage, grapefruit, peanuts, and nước mắm or her bay leaf flan with local persimmons and crème fraîche, all paired with Texas wines. —*A.C.*

⑥ **Andrew Weissman** San Antonio is supposed to be famous for puffy tacos, not puff pastry, but hometown hero Andrew Weissman slew that stereotype when he returned from cooking stints in France to open the refined downtown restaurant Le Rêve in 1998. Critics and civilians alike flocked there to taste this bold young chef's classic French dishes, which were often spiked with international ingredients (think kaffir lime leaf and coconut broth with diver scallops or a foie gras sandwich with tomato jam and bacon). In 2005 Weissman opened the casual Sandbar Fish House & Market, next door to Le Rêve, and this year he's venturing into Italian with Il Sogno. Like Le Rêve's, its name means the dream. —*P.S.*

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS



Chef Monica Pope in the dining room of her Houston restaurant T'afia, eating scallops with snow peas and beurre blanc.

REPORTER

Born Green

Behind the Whole Foods empire is a Texan tale of gastronomic gumption

BY SAM GWYNNE

ANYONE WHO MET JOHN Mackey, the CEO of the $8 billion retail empire called Whole Foods Market, in 1978 would probably not have considered him a dynamo. Like a lot of young people in the laid-back city of Austin, the 25-year-old Houston native was in search of himself, God, and some vague sense of what he was supposed to do with his life. He had dropped in and out of college six times. Together with his 21-year-old girlfriend, Renee Lawson, he ran a little natural foods store called Safer Way. It was the sort of quirky granola den you may remember from the era: 3,000 square feet of brown rice, beans, nuts, unbleached flour, raw milk, and organic produce, all of it crammed into the first floor of a bright red, three-story Victorian house. The couple operated a small restaurant on the second floor and lived upstairs from it; because there was no shower in the apartment they sometimes drove the company car—an old, powder blue mail truck with pictures of dancing vegetables painted on its sides—across the river so that they could bathe in the waters of the city's Barton Springs.



The staff of the original Whole Foods Market, in Austin, in 1981. Cofounder and current Whole Foods CEO John Mackey is in the back row, third from the right (with mustache and red shirt) .

COURTESY WHOLE FOODS MARKET®

The first Whole Foods store was only two years away, but in 1978 Mackey and Lawson were just scraping by, which was remarkably easy to do in Austin at the time. The city was a haven for the young, the freethinking, and the oddball. Its vibe was set by University of Texas students and, in no small measure, ex-students, who stuck around in droves, attracted by a liberal political culture, a low cost of living, and a dynamic music scene, which in the early 1970s witnessed the birth of "outlaw country", with musicians like Willie Nelson and Jerry Jeff Walker playing to combined crowds of rednecks and longhairs. "It was incredibly easy to live here," says Andy Cotton, an Austinite and cofounder of the Thundercloud Subs chain, now an institution in the city, in 1975. "Housing was cheap, pot was cheap, gas was cheap; there was lots of music and lots of good-looking girls." It's hardly surprising that, among Texans generally, Austin earned the epithet "ninety square miles surrounded by reality".

The city was also home to a robust natural foods subculture; people were joining small food co-ops, making unpasteurized yogurt in their bathtubs, and eschewing all processed, industrial food. That was the scene that intrigued Mackey, a part-time religion and philosophy student, when he moved to Austin in 1973. "I ended up living in this vegetarian housing co-op called Prana House," he recalled when I sat down with him recently in his office at the Whole Foods global headquarters, in downtown Austin. He was sporting a polo shirt, shorts, and running shoes and had long since shorn the shaggy hair he wore during the 1970s. "It wasn't because I was particularly interested in co-ops," he says. "I just thought it would be interesting. I thought I would meet some interesting women. I did, but I also got exposed to a bunch of vegetarians who had food consciousness." At Prana House—where he met Lawson, also a resident—Mackey learned to cook, familiarized himself with the works of writers influential within the natural foods movement like Rudolf Steiner, Adelle Davis, and Orville Schell, and eventually became the co-op's food buyer.

Mackey's next step on the road to "conscious capitalism" (as he would later describe

SAM GWYNNE, *a former* Time *bureau chief in Austin, Texas, is a regular contributor to* Texas Monthly, *among other publications.*

his business model) was to get a job at a natural foods store, one of several that had recently popped up in Austin. By the time he and Lawson started Safer Way, in 1978, the city had 15 similar stores, most of them scrappy, shoestring operations. One of them, Clarksville Natural Grocery, belonged to Mackey's friends Craig Weller and Mark Skiles. "Back in those days a natural foods store was expected to be a tiny little place run by counterculture fringe-type people," says Skiles. "We all went about it ass-backwards, including John, but that's just the way it was. Anything that looked too organized smacked of, well, being organized."

But Safer Way needed some organization. The store was slowly bleeding to death. After barely a year they had already burned through half of its $45,000 of start-up capital; then a hepatitis scare related to a juice the store carried (made by a supplier) led to a 20 percent drop in sales. If the end wasn't yet in sight, well, it probably would not be long in coming.

MACKEY HAD A HUNCH that Safer Way and all the other fledgling health food stores in town were going about things the wrong way. In 1979, he made pilgrimages to a number of big-city natural foods supermarkets. He visited Bread & Circus in Boston, Mrs. Gooch's in Los Angeles, and Frazier Farms in San Diego, among others. He returned to Austin with a new vision. "I'm a competitive guy, and I realized that with Safer Way I was not in a good competitive situation," Mackey says. "After I visited those stores, I was on fire. I realized, We've got to do a big store." He persuaded Weller and Skiles to join him—in effect merging Clarksville Natural Grocery and Safer Way—and scraped together start-up funds from friends and family. In September 1980, Mackey and his partners launched Whole Foods in a former nightclub just a few blocks from their old stores.

The venture represented an enormous risk. By the standards of most health food stores, the first Whole Foods was gargantuan: 10,500 square feet. Weller and Skiles had been paying $600 a month in rent at Clarksville; they were now looking at a figure five times that. The Whole Foods inventory was similarly massive, of a size unheard of for a natural foods market. Perhaps the riskiest bet—at least in the eyes of health food purists—was the merchandise itself: the new store sold coffee and soon added beer, wine, and meat to its offerings.

"We made the decision to do a real grocery store," Mackey says. "We didn't want to be 'Holy Foods'." Instead of the shopworn, ideologically rigid ambience of a mom-and-pop natural foods store, Whole Foods had well-lighted aisles and modern checkout stations. Mackey and the others had no idea whether this new model would fly. "We were scared shitless, basically," says Skiles. "The extent of our market research was 'Gosh, I think it will work'." Mackey, for his part, had figured that the break-even was about $3,000 a day.

"WE ALL WENT ABOUT IT ASS-BACKWARDS," SAYS COFOUNDER SKILES. "BUT THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT WAS. ANYTHING THAT LOOKED TOO ORGANIZED SMACKED OF, WELL, BEING ORGANIZED"

The store hit that break-even mark by three in the afternoon on the day it opened. Within

Natural Selection: The Evolution of Whole Foods Market

1980 | The first Whole Foods Market opens in Austin, Texas, after the merger of two local stores, Safer Way Natural Foods and Clarksville Natural Grocery. The 10,500-square-foot store has an initial staff of 16 people.

1991 | The company launches its own Whole Foods brand, becoming the first retailer to maintain a private-label line featuring organic food products; by 2009 the store's 365 Everyday Value line includes more than 2,000 items.



1991 | With the acquisition of Wellspring Grocery, of North Carolina, Whole Foods starts to expand its inventory to include more specialty, high-end food items. Wellspring owner Lex Alexander stays on with Whole Foods as director of private-label products.

1996 | Whole Foods begins importing a number of foods that are new to the American market, including marcona almonds, two-year-aged parmigiano-reggiano, and Dalmatian coast fig spread. It becomes the first U.S. chain retailer to carry fresh (as compared with canned) olives from France.



2000 | Whole Foods works closely with Jan Bastiaansen of the Netherlands to help him become the first certified organic cheese producer in the European Union. Later that year Whole Foods becomes the first retailer to ship an entire container (40,000 pounds) of organic cheese from the EU to the United States.

2003 | Whole Foods is designated America's first National Certified Organic Grocer. Three years earlier, Whole Foods was the first national food retailer to join the USDA advisory board to help develop the U.S. Organic Standards.

USDA ORGANIC

2004 | With the purchase of UK-based Fresh & Wild stores, Whole Foods begins its expansion into Europe. Three years after that, the first overseas branch bearing the name Whole Foods Market opens in the Kensington area of London; there are now five such stores in the UK.



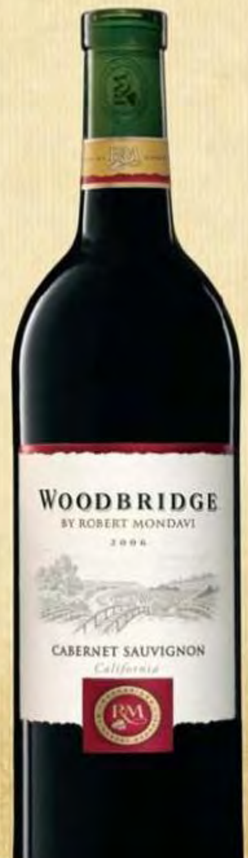
2007 | The Federal Trade Commission seeks to block Whole Foods's $670 million acquisition of Wild Oats Markets, its largest competitor. Whole Foods eventually wins the battle, but only after selling leases for 19 closed Wild Oats stores and divesting itself of 13 still-operating stores to restore competition.

2008 | Whole Foods implements stricter guidelines for farmed seafood, reducing environmental impact and requiring vendors to pass a third-party audit. Existing standards prohibited antibiotics, hormones, sulfites, mammalian by-products in feed, and genetically modified or cloned seafood.

2009 | Whole Foods employs 52,000 people in more than 280 stores in the U.S., Canada, and the UK. The tenth-largest food and drug store in the U.S., Whole Foods ranks 369th on the Fortune 500 list, with annual sales of approximately $8 billion.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY WHOLE FOODS; ENVISION/CORBIS; COURTESY WHOLE FOODS; COURTESY UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE


BN_007513_SAV0709


WOODBRIDGE
BY ROBERT MONDAVI
2006
CABERNET SAUVIGNON
California

months, the business was grossing $200,000 a week; virtually overnight, it became the highest-volume natural foods market in the country. And by the end of the first year, the store, which had started with a mere 16 employees and not enough inventory to stock its shelves (the owners cheated by filling empty spaces with five-gallon water jugs and extra-large bags of chips), had a staff of more than a hundred.

What's more remarkable, perhaps, is that Mackey and his partners accomplished all this without offering any of the expensive "gourmet" foods—goat cheeses, handmade pastas, balsamic vinegars, and so on—for which the chain is now famous. Mackey himself was "more of a guy who would go on a ten-day juice fast or an all–brown rice diet", he says. That move toward gourmet products did not start in earnest until Whole Foods acquired the more epicurean Wellspring Grocery (with two stores in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina), in 1991; for its first decade, it remained fundamentally a health food store. "Coffee was a good example of that," Mackey adds. "We were just buying coffee that was cheap, bulk coffee, whatever was least expensive. Coffee was coffee. We didn't know anything about olive oil, either."

Austin loved them anyway. The best evidence of that came after the great flood of Memorial Day 1981, which deposited eight feet of water in the store. The company had no flood insurance. All seemed lost. Mackey was so sure of it that he spent the first night in front of the store with friends drinking beer and trying to figure out his next move. "Part of me was kind of relieved," he says. "I had worked so hard for three years. I thought that maybe I would go live in Europe for a while. I was still only 27 years old."

But when Mackey showed up to start cleaning the next day, he was greeted by a bunch of people he had never seen before. "It turned out that they were customers who had come in to shop that day and had pitched in," he recalls. Over the next few days, dozens more volunteered. The recovery was miraculous. Investors and banks kicked in more money, and the store reopened in 28 days.

THE EXPERIMENT HAD worked. Today the Whole Foods empire comprises 281 stores in three countries. And yet the same cultural divisions—hippie Austin versus Texas at large, counterculture versus consumer culture, advocacy versus profit—that played out in the original store are still at work within the vast, publicly traded entity that Whole Foods has become. The past two and a half decades have been a period of relentless expansion during which the company—now the largest natural and organic foods grocer in the world—has acquired one competitor after another: Massachusetts-based Bread & Circus in 1992, the seven locations of Los Angeles–based Mrs. Gooch's in 1993, and, in a controversial merger that led to a government antitrust suit (eventually settled in favor of Whole Foods), Wild Oats Markets, its main competitor in the natural foods niche, which consisted of more than 100 stores in 24 states and British Columbia.

All the while, Mackey, who remains CEO

"WE MADE THE DECISION TO BE A REAL GROCERY STORE," SAYS JOHN MACKEY. "WE DIDN'T WANT TO BE 'HOLY FOODS'"

(Renee Lawson opted out in 1981, Skiles in 1985, Weller in 2000), has waged a high-profile campaign to ensure an equitable workplace and ethical business practices. Company policy caps executive salaries at 19 times what the average employee makes (Mackey has even chosen to reduce his annual salary to one dollar), and everyone who works 30 hours a week or more is offered health benefits. He has also imposed strict food-quality standards, which have dramatically expanded the market for organic produce, fish, and meat (albeit, some argue, at the expense of smaller, local producers).

Still, over the past decade or so, Whole Foods has developed a reputation among many consumers as a place you go more for gastronomic splurges than for organic, fair-trade, or locally produced food. Mackey himself admitted as much to me, saying that Whole Foods had become more of a "foodie-oriented store". But the visionary impulse that gave rise to a new, enlightened era of grocery shopping back in 1980 lives on; Mackey says that the company will be returning to its roots over the next decade as it devotes more resources to promoting healthful eating. "We have had a real emphasis on pleasurable eating," he told me, "and have relatively neglected the healthy aspect of things. That is going to change." If history is any indicator, as Whole Foods changes, the world will change right along with it.

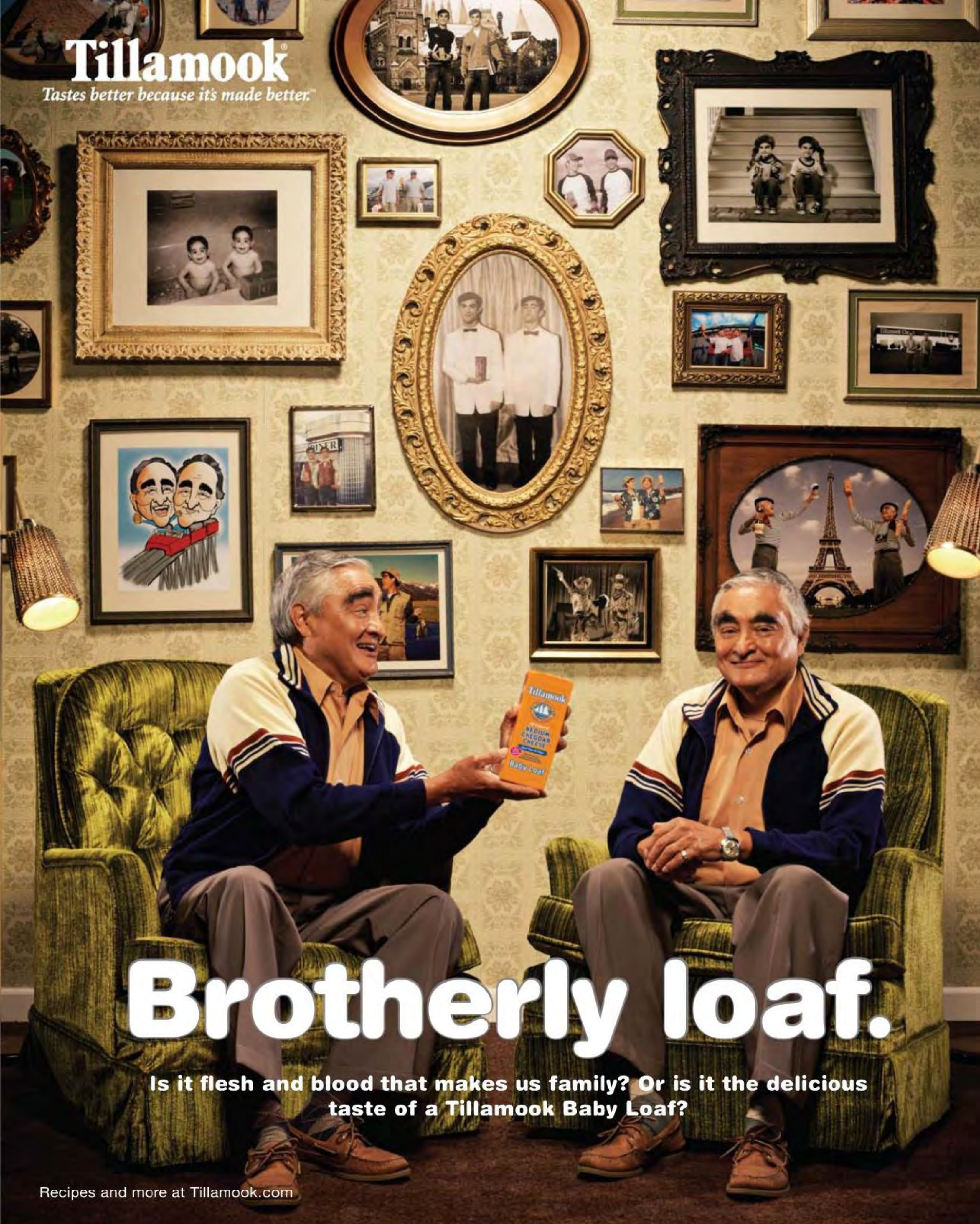


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Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Poll

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TWENTY-FOUR REASONS WHY WE LOVE TEXAS

ADMIT IT, FOOD LOVERS of the world. There's a part of you that wishes you were Texan. And who would blame you? Texans, virtually all 25 million of them, have a way with food you won't find anywhere else: slow-smoked brisket so good it makes you sigh; plump Galveston Bay oysters seared on a hot grill; over-the-top steaks cut from prime Texas steer; legendary chili cook-offs; the world's greatest hot sauce festival; the mesquite-kissed cooking of the state's southern frontier; and that delicious hybrid phenomenon called Tex-Mex. And we're just scratching the surface. Texas also has artisan cheeses, burgeoning urban farm markets, brilliant winemakers, chefs who have made local ingredients a national obsession, and, lest we forget, the best margaritas on Earth. Is it possible to capture all the bravura and glory of Texas food in just 24 short chapters? Probably not, but it would be awfully un-Texan not to try. —*The Editors*

Look for these symbols: R for a recipe in the section called The Recipes, page 81; P for more information on ingredients and locations in THE PANTRY, page 108; W for more information at www.saveur.com/issue121.

MICHAEL KRAUS





1. THE BEST BEEF ON EARTH

No state does beef the way Texas does: tender briskets at roadside barbecue joints, juicy T-bones at high-roller steak houses, spicy carne asada at taco stands, and on and on and on. Good beef is more than a Texan birthright; it's a point of pride: the state produces more beef than any other, and for many of its nearly 150,000 cattlemen, ranching is a family business that stretches back a century or more. Most commercial breeds are represented on Texas's plains, from the well-marbled Angus to the noble Brahman, which thrive in Texas's summer heat. And though the lean and hardy Texas longhorn steer (pictured) came close to extinction decades ago, producers have recently brought it back. That's something worth celebrating: not only is that breed an emblem of the Old West, but, according to purists, lean longhorn beef makes the best Texas chili.

JRC, INC/ALAMY

2. CHUCK WAGON COOKING

IT'S EASY TO RELEGATE CHUCK WAGONS, those enduring symbols of the hoary Old West, to a historical footnote in the story of Texas cuisine, but if you ask me, that would be doing them a disservice. Those rudimentary mobile kitchens of the open range, not to mention the colorful characters who knew how to use them, represent everything I love about the way Texans cook and eat: the gusto, the communal spirit, the bold flavors, the knack for making the most of the ingredients and tools that were at hand.

Before the Texas cattleman Charles Goodnight constructed the first chuck wagon, in 1866, cowboys carried food in saddlebags and cooked it themselves over a campfire. On longer journeys, supplies were packed in a wood cabinet, known as a chuck box, that was strapped to a mule. (*Chuck* is an old English word that originally referred, as it does today, to the cheap cut of beef; for cowboys, it was slang for food.)

After the Civil War, enterprising ranchers like Goodnight began organizing crews to round up the thousands of longhorn cattle that had escaped or been set free by war-bound ranchers. He also devised a more efficient way of feeding his crew on the long trail drives: on the back of a wagon, Goodnight mounted a chuck box. It had a hinged door that folded down to serve as a work surface with drawers for utensils, as well as another storage space, called the boot, that carried dutch ovens and iron skillets. Under the wagon, a cowhide or canvas sling held wood and dried dung to fuel the cooking fires. Goodnight's design became a cattle industry standard, and by the mid-1880s, chuck wagons were being built by both individual wagon wrights and big wagon-building companies like the South Bend, Indiana–based Studebaker.

Chuck wagon cooks were often over-the-hill cowboys who signed on for the job when they were no longer fit to punch cattle. They answered to such nicknames as biscuit shooter, bean master, belly cheater, and pot rustler, but the best of them earned the respect of the crew, fulfilling the role not just of provisioner and cook but also, often, of medic, banker, mediator, and confidant. "He had no butter and eggs . . . but he understood his business of preparing good, substantial grub for ravenous appetites," writes Ramon F. Adams in *Come an' Get It: The Story of the Old Cowboy Cook* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), a literary history of chuck wagon cooks. "As long as he could prepare sizzling steaks, concoct a stew, cook the beans so they wouldn't rattle in the tin plates, build sourdough biscuits, and boil coffee until it was plenty strong, he could qualify as a cook."

The fare was simple, tasty, and hearty. Protein came from preserved salt pork and wild game caught along the way, but the real belly fillers were pinto beans accompanied by quick-rising sourdough biscuits and, if the cowboys were lucky, a preserved-fruit cobbler for dessert. It wasn't every day that cowboys on the trail ate beef; every head of cattle brought profits at the end of a trail drive, so only an injured steer or another herd's stray would be butchered. When that happened, steaks were fried in skillets over an open fire, and pot roasts were braised in a dutch oven heated atop hot coals, as was "son-of-a-bitch stew", a chuck wagon standby made from a cow's liver, kidneys, and other innards.

By the late 1880s, the westward expansion of the railroads, which could transport live cattle, put an end to the trail drives. The era of the chuck wagon came to a close. Some of the old wagons have survived and been lovingly restored by enthusiasts who have sparked a revival of interest in this venerated style of cooking. Every year, modern-day cowboys travel around Texas to attend chuck wagon rallies and cook-offs, where they prepare the kind of dishes that sustained their forebears out on the range.

These mobile kitchens represent the ingenuity and camaraderie of real Texas cooks

I've been to a few such events, where I've marveled at the ingenious design of those simple wagons and laughed with wisecracking cooks. And I've eaten darned well while I was at it. But it's more than nostalgia that draws me to those gatherings. It's the joy of experiencing the ever present camaraderie and inspired resourcefulness of real Texas cooks, which live on so vividly in Texas kitchens today. —*Sharon Hudgins, author of* The Other Side of Russia *(Texas A&M University Press, 2004)*

F. M. STEELE/CORBIS

A crew of cowboys along Texas's Goodnight-Loving trail break for a meal circa 1905, facing page.





ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

3. A Real Bowl of Red For many non-Texans, the defining trait of Texas chili is the stuff that's not in it: most notably beans, ground beef, and cheese. True Lone Star chili is a simple yet powerful thing: cubed beef chuck simmered with tomatoes and chili powder for hours before being thickened with masa harina (corn flour). The version pictured is from Woody DeSilva's winning recipe at the 1968 Terlingua, Texas, chili cook-off, now in its 43rd year. R

4. CHILI POWDER

WITHOUT CHILI POWDER, chili con carne would be just beef stew, and the world would be a duller place. It is to Texas what peanut butter is to jelly: you can't think of one without the other.

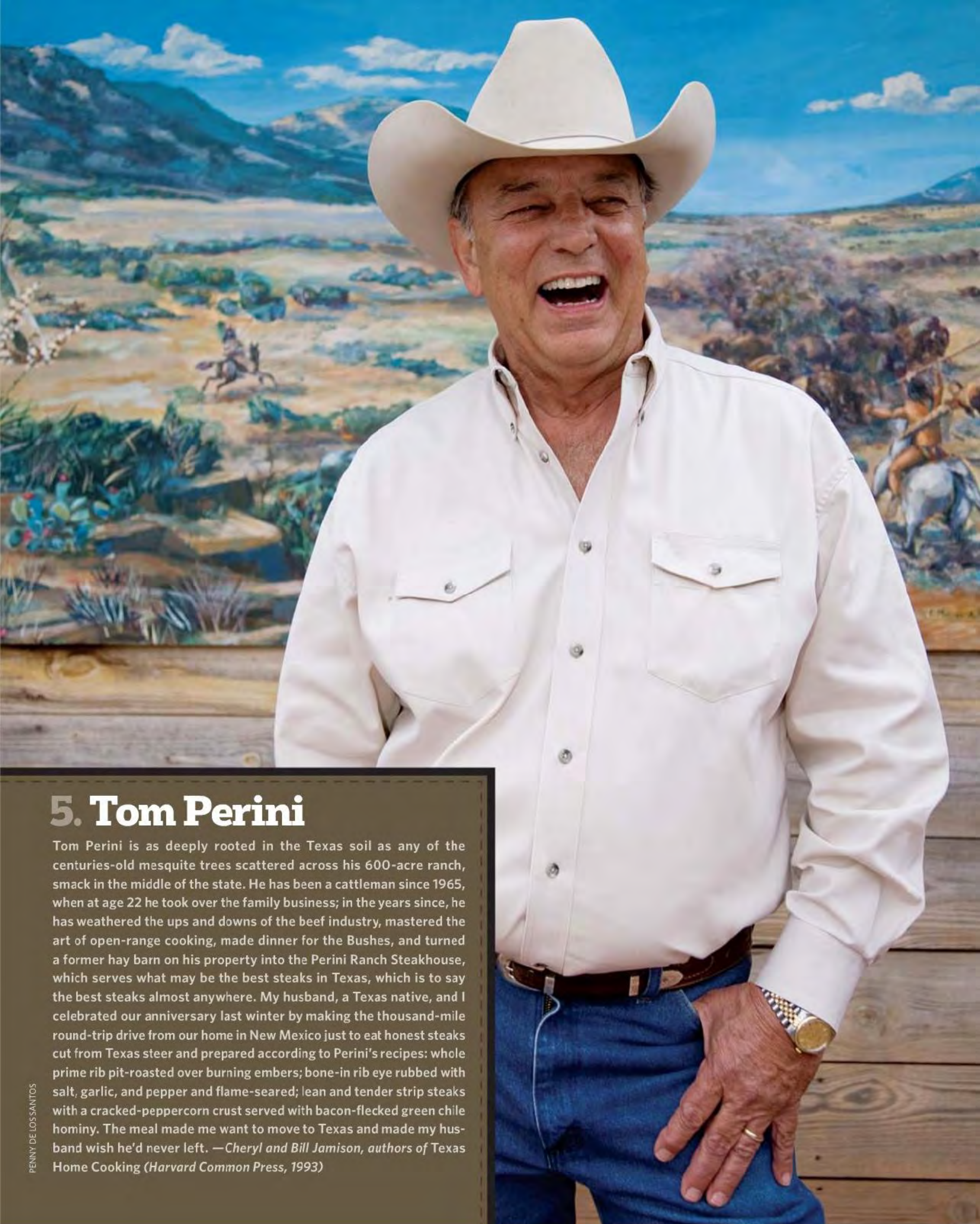
Chili powder's deep red color and robust aroma form the very identity of Tex-Mex food, seasoning the meat for chilis and tacos and thickening the sauce for enchiladas. The stuff is made from seemingly mundane ingredients—dried chiles (usually ancho), oregano, cumin, garlic, and, sometimes, salt—that, when processed together, make a substance whose properties are nothing short of magical. Soluble in fat, the powder disperses its color and potent flavor when fried in oil or grease, melding with the beef and tomatoes in a pot of chili to create its distinctive taste and look. Rubbed onto a steak before grilling, it lends a striking hue and char.

Chili powder was invented in Texas; by whom is a matter of some dispute. The chili historian Joe Cooper maintains that a German immigrant named William Gebhardt invented the first chili powder in 1896 in the town of New Braunfels, which lies between Austin and San Antonio. Gebhardt operated a café in the back of a place called Miller's Saloon and devised a way of pulverizing Mexican dried chiles using a meat grinder (probably in an adaptation of the Hungarian method for making paprika). He sold his new product as Tampico Dust but later changed the name to Gebhardt's Eagle Chili Powder, as it is still called today. The foodstuff, which spared home cooks the laborious task of drying the chiles and pulverizing them by hand, became extremely popular throughout Texas and, later, the rest of the United States.



Other accounts point to a man named DeWitt Clinton Pendery as the powder's inventor. In 1870 he opened a dry goods store in Fort Worth called the Mexican Chilley Supply Company, and in 1890 he marketed a seasoning powder called Chiltomaline. Although it had apparently beat Gebhardt's to the punch by a few years, Pendery's product failed to catch on. "It is well said," he is reported to have remarked, "that few persons appreciate the benefits to be derived from the use of [chili powder]." We count ourselves among those who do.

MICHAEL KRAUS



5. Tom Perini

Tom Perini is as deeply rooted in the Texas soil as any of the centuries-old mesquite trees scattered across his 600-acre ranch, smack in the middle of the state. He has been a cattleman since 1965, when at age 22 he took over the family business; in the years since, he has weathered the ups and downs of the beef industry, mastered the art of open-range cooking, made dinner for the Bushes, and turned a former hay barn on his property into the Perini Ranch Steakhouse, which serves what may be the best steaks in Texas, which is to say the best steaks almost anywhere. My husband, a Texas native, and I celebrated our anniversary last winter by making the thousand-mile round-trip drive from our home in New Mexico just to eat honest steaks cut from Texas steer and prepared according to Perini's recipes: whole prime rib pit-roasted over burning embers; bone-in rib eye rubbed with salt, garlic, and pepper and flame-seared; lean and tender strip steaks with a cracked-peppercorn crust served with bacon-flecked green chile hominy. The meal made me want to move to Texas and made my husband wish he'd never left. —*Cheryl and Bill Jamison, authors of* Texas Home Cooking *(Harvard Common Press, 1993)*

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

TEXAS

6. CHEESE REVOLUTION



PANELA FRESCA (La Vaquita, Houston) This fresh Mexican-style cooking cheese from a 32-year-old, family-run dairy has a milky flavor and is perfect for crumbling over tostadas and tacos.



REDNECK CHEDDAR (Veldhuizen Family Farms, Dublin) A raw cows' milk cheddar that's washed in Texas's own Saint Arnold's beer and cave-aged, this sharp cheese has a mild, malty sweetness.



HOJA SANTA GOAT CHEESE (Mozzarella Company, Dallas) This fresh goat cheese is wrapped in the leaves of a Mexican herb called hoja santa, which imparts an anise-like flavor.



SAINTE MAURE (Pure Luck Farm and Dairy, Dripping Springs) Creamy and slightly ripened, this French-style goat cheese has a tang that evokes a cross between fresh chèvre and Roquefort.



AZADEROS (Licon Dairy, San Elizario) The Licon family makes this fresh cheese, typical of those from Chihuahua, Mexico, in thin, tortilla-like sheets. It melts beautifully in tortas and quesadillas.



BRAZOS VALLEY HAVARTI (Brazos Valley Cheese, Waco) This zesty raw-milk havarti is smoked with pecan shells, which give the cheese a pleasing, slightly woodsy taste.



FRESH CAMPESINO (Lucky Layla Farms, Garland) This springy, salty cows' milk cheese is often served grilled or pan-fried but is also delicious straight out of the package.



BABY BLUE (CKC Farms, Blanco) Cheese maker Chrissy Omo is only 21, but she has already earned a name for her company with this buttery and delicately funky blue made from goats' milk.



CACIOTTA WITH ANCHO CHILE (Mozzarella Company, Dallas) Ancho chiles give this earthy goats' milk caciotta a subtle heat that makes it an addictive snack.

MICHAEL KRAUS

7. EL PASO

INTERSTATE 10 RUNS RIGHT THROUGH El Paso, cinching its sunbaked buildings to the desert foothills of the Franklin Mountains. Along this stretch, the interstate roughly mimics the course of the nearby Rio Grande, the river that divides El Paso from the Mexican city of Juárez. Together, these two cities form a conjoined borderplex of around 2 million people, one of the largest metropolitan areas along the entire U.S.–Mexico border.

As Texas border towns go (think Brownsville, Laredo, McAllen), El Paso is big, busy, and, well, tall. Early on a Sunday morning, though, the faded art deco skyscrapers of the downtown area are empty; the streets are mostly deserted. Closer to the river, at the city's southern edge, there are more people out and about, and a few *menuderias* are busy serving the Mexican tripe soup known as menudo. One place, at the corner of Sixth and Oregon, has a bright yellow sign promising both the soup and prepaid phone cards. At the window I order a chicharrón gordita (a fat, lightly charred tortilla stuffed with braised pork rind) and a bowl of the stew-like, deep red menudo, which comes studded with plump kernels of hominy.

This is border food, and in this far western elbow of Texas, at the state's intersection with New Mexico and "Old Mexico", as some people out this way refer to it, that means a very specific convergence of traditions. There's the hearty, rustic cuisine of the cattle ranches and wheat farms founded in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua when the Spanish still claimed this territory. There's the Texan penchant for living large—an extra ladleful of chile gravy on your scrambled eggs, a thick blanket of melted cheddar on your nachos. And there's the abundance of chiles grown in the fertile valley just over the New Mexico border, which are stuffed with cheese and then deep-fried to make chiles rellenos at the beginning of the season, when they're still green; later, once they're ripe and red, they're dried, pulverized, and simmered to make piquant chile colorado sauce. It all adds up to an honest, spicy, intensely flavorful cuisine that's at once earthy and bright, spare and effusive, Mexican and Texan, Southwestern and *norteño*—food that makes borders seem like nothing more than lines on a map.

THESE DAYS, THOUGH, people are more aware of borders than ever. "History is repeating itself," says 60-year-old David Jurado, as he slices into a ripe avocado. I'm in the handsome adobe home of his brother, Henry, 72, and sister-in-law, Luz, 66, who have invited me for lunch. "Juárez has become so dangerous that people—those who can afford to—are coming here and staying."

"Even the mayor of Juárez now lives in El Paso," Henry says. The Jurados' father emigrated to El Paso from Chihuahua as a small boy in 1919, during the Mexican Revolution, when more than 890,000 Mexicans came to the United States to escape the violence raging right up to the border. "Back then," David says, "people in El Paso would climb up to their rooftops to watch the battles in Juárez. Now we watch it on the news."

Each day, some 100,000 people travel back and forth between Juárez and El Paso, though in recent years things have happened that have made that passage heavier going. NAFTA brought hundreds of American-owned *maquiladoras*, or factories, to the Mexican side, attracting thousands of people from the interior of Mexico to Juárez in search of work and giving rise to all the problems associated with rapid growth. Most recently, a war of succession among local drug cartels has grown increasingly bloody: there were 1,600 murders in Juárez last year alone. Residents of Juárez look forward to their day jobs in El Paso, which, incredibly, remains one of the safest cities in the United States. For their part, El Pasoans who are able to are staying put. "I used to go across to Juárez three, four times a week," Henry tells me, "but I wouldn't set foot there now."

The Jurados maintain a big part of their connection to Mexico through cooking. For lunch they are making salpicón, a salad of shredded meat eaten throughout Mexico, Central America, and parts of South America. In some places it's made with chicken; in others, with fish. In El Paso and Chihuahua, it features beef brisket lightly dressed with lime and chipotle. "You have do it with your fingers," Luz says, separating bits of brisket into a delicate hash, "to make sure the texture is right." It's a recipe passed down from David and Henry's mother, Estela Jurado, who was, in her day, a (continued on page 47)

This is border food at its best—earthy and bright, spicy and sunbaked, Mexican and Texan

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

The Jurado family's shredded beef with avocado and lime, facing page.





Three generations of the Enriquez family preparing fish with a tomatillo sauce. From left to right, 13-year-old Carlota Enriquez, her 64-year-old grandmother (also Carlota Enriquez), 12-year-old Sofia Zaragoza, 8-year-old Juliana Enriquez, 37-year-old Carla Sofia Zaragoza, 39-year-old Rocio Enriquez.



PENNY DE LOS SANTOS



(continued from page 42) renowned cook in El Paso. When Estela's children were young, her formidable skills were much in demand for church functions. "Her cochinita pibil...," Henry says, closing his eyes and savoring the memory of the slow-roasted suckling pig his mother prepared on special occasions. In the late 1950s, Estela started a catering business; then, in 1972, she rented a storefront downtown and opened Casa Jurado. The family has been running the restaurant, now an El Paso institution, ever since.

"We don't eat Tex-Mex here," Henry says.

"No combo plates," Luz adds firmly. I don't bother to mention that I'm a fan of the combo plate and of Tex-Mex food in general. The combo concept is an ingenious one originally developed to transform Mexican antojitos, or individual snacks, into restaurant meals; once plates and forks entered the picture, heavier saucing and toppings of melted cheese soon followed. In this corner of Texas, however, the cuisine has remained more Mex and less Tex, more austere in presentation, the better to reveal the subtleties of the local ingredients and seasonings.

The Jurados' salpicón is a perfect example of that: dotted with finely sliced jalapeños and scallions, diced tomatoes, and monterey jack cheese, the brisket salad is garnished with slices of avocado and served simply, with flour tortillas. It's pure, fresh-tasting food. "Really, though, if you want to understand how we eat here," David says, "you need to get across to New Mexico."

THE NEXT DAY, I FOLLOW an old two-lane highway through the pecan orchards of southern New Mexico to the house of 59-year-old María Luisa González in Las Cruces. She's a friend of the Jurados'; everyone calls her Malú. She greets me at the door and leads me into the kitchen, where I meet her 85-year-old mother, who is also named María Luisa González. Malú and one of her grandsons, John Larson, 25, are making enchiladas three ways, in the styles of New Mexico, El Paso, and Juárez.

When Malú was young, her family lived in Juárez, though she went to school every day in El Paso and also spent a lot of time with relatives in southern New Mexico. Movement across borders was more fluid then, as it has been for much of the region's recent history. There was actually a period in the mid-19th century when much of the area between El Paso and Las Cruces, 45 miles northwest, bounced back and forth between Mexico and the United States, depending on the shifting course of the Rio Grande.

A pan full of chile colorado sauce is warming on the stove. It consists of nothing more than dried chiles, olive oil, garlic, and sea salt, and it's going into all three kinds of enchilada. John learned to cook at his grandmother's side; the two of them move comfortably around each other in the kitchen while María Luisa keeps a sharp eye on the proceedings. To make the New Mexico–style enchiladas, John, instead of rolling the tortillas, lays them flat, three to a stack, each tortilla dipped in chile colorado and topped with a sparse scattering of cheddar cheese. On top of each stack of tortillas goes a perfect, quivering fried egg. That's something I haven't seen in Texas east of El Paso.

The Texas-style batch looks more familiar. These enchiladas, rolled and nestled side by side in a baking dish, emerge from the oven

El Paso isn't about combo plates. "We don't eat Tex-Mex here," says Henry, as he serves up a tangy shredded beef salad called salpicón

with a glistening lattice of shredded white and yellow cheddar on top. "You'd never get this in Mexico," John says. "There, cheese is just a garnish, used very sparingly." Finally, there are the northern Mexico–style enchiladas. "These are like the ones we used to eat in Juárez," María Luisa says, "in the market, at the *fritanga* [fried food] stands, with their kettles of hot oil." This version is rolled, too, but only lightly dusted with crumbly cotija cheese and accompanied by fried diced potatoes and a tangy cabbage and radish slaw.

Though the basic ingredients are the same, the three versions are decidedly not. The differences between them come down to subtleties of technique—an extra dip of a tortilla in hot oil, another ten minutes on the stove to reduce the sauce, a pinch of cumin tossed in at the end—the kind handed down intuitively, from mother to daughter to grandson, in the same way a sense of humor or an ear for music might be.

JUST AFTER SUNSET THE following day, I'm in the hills above El Paso, overlooking the grid of lights that sprawls uninterrupted across the border into Juárez and beyond. I'd planned to visit a family friend of Malú's in Juárez, Carla Sofia Zaragoza. But, just days earlier, she'd made the decision to get her children out of that city until the violence there subsided—whenever that might be. Still, Carla thought nothing of inviting me to dinner tonight at the home of her mother, Carlota Enriquez, who moved to El Paso almost 20 years ago, after her daughters were grown. Carla's sister, Rocio Enriquez, who left Juárez 10 years ago, is there, too, when I arrive. This is the new generation of émigrés, moving to El Paso from the cities of Mexico's north and from other regions, too, bringing their distinctive cooking traditions with them.

In her mother's kitchen, Rocio calmly directs her mother, sister, two daughters, and niece as they chop, mix, and taste. Carla bounces her 18-month-old son, Santiago, on her hip as her mother offers her a spoonful of pico de gallo. "Too much jalapeño?" Carlota asks; she then adds some cubes of avocado to soften the bite. Eight-year-old Juliana is barely tall enough to see over the countertop, where she's grating cheese. Carla hands me a glass of cool agua de jamaica.

For dinner we have pan-fried tilapia served over fresh tomatoes and drizzled first with a tangy tomatillo sauce and then with cooling crema. "My great-grandmother from Sonora used to make this," Carlota says, as she puts a plate before me.

Later, we linger for a long time over choco flan, a bundt-style chocolate cake topped with a sumptuous layer of flan. Carla and Rocio talk about their favorite dishes when they were growing up. They recall how, when they began attending a school in El Paso, their mother would drive them across the border each morning and then return to Juárez to make a chicken soup, thick with potatoes and calabacita squash. When the soup was finished, she'd drive back to El Paso in time to deliver the girls a hot lunch. Then she would head home again to start dinner. "No matter what happened," Rocio says, "we knew that there would be soup at lunchtime and rice and beans and mole waiting for us at the end of the day." Whatever side of the border they were on, that food made them feel at home. —*Beth Kracklauer*

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

The González family's red chile enchiladas, facing page.



8. Gulf Oystermen

"I eat somewhere between a dozen and 60 oysters a day," says Misho Ivic (facing page), the owner of Misho's Oyster Company of San Leon, near Galveston. "I ride a speedboat around and check all my boats, like a shepherd watching his flock, and I take a few oysters from each boat to see how they are." Not a bad life, I'd say. Croatian-Americans like Ivic have long worked in the thriving Gulf Coast oyster industry, though Ivic himself wasn't born into the trade. He left Zagreb in 1972 and bought his first oyster-bed lease in Galveston Bay, where virginica oysters have long flourished in sheltered estuaries, in 1977. Today four of Ivic's six children are in the oyster business; a fifth married a Croatian-American oysterman. What is Ivic looking for when he tastes all those oysters? "I like to see a lot of purple on the inside of the shell; that means the oyster is absorbing minerals. The perfect oyster grows between freshwater and saltwater, and it gets fatter and sweeter as the water gets colder in winter." Ivic exports as many oysters as he sells in-state, but, if you ask me, a mess of those fat, sweet Gulf oysters—raw, fried, or broiled (pictured, as prepared at Gilhooley's in San Leon with shrimp and parmigiano-reggiano)—is as Texan as beefsteak. —*Robb Walsh, author of* Sex, Death, and Oysters: An Oyster Lover's World Tour *(Counterpoint, 2009)* Ⓡ

LANDON NORDEMAN (2)





LANDON NORDEMAN

9. Redfish on the Half Shell Of all the dishes chef Bryan Caswell serves at Reef, his genre-defying restaurant in Houston, this is the one he considers the most truly Texan. Redfish, which has long been a favorite Gulf fish (though a ban on commercial catches means that most are farm-raised these days), is grilled in its "shell"—simply the skin (scales and all, which have been left on the filet), grilled to a crisp. The technique, favored by locals who can't be bothered to scale their fish, keeps the flesh tender and moist. Seldom has laziness begat something so delicious. R

TEXAS

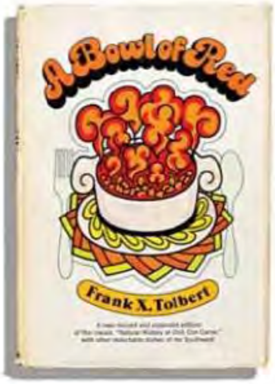
10. FOOD WRITING WITH SOUL



TEXAS MONTHLY ON FOOD (University of Texas Press, 2008) The writers of *Texas Monthly* magazine know Texas food, and they know how best to sniff out great stories—as this anthology proves.



THE TEX-MEX COOKBOOK (Broadway Books, 2004) From turn-of-the century street food to the origin of tamale pie, this entertaining book traces the cross-cultural roots of Tex-Mex cooking.



A BOWL OF RED (Doubleday & Company, 1972) Chili history, chili legends, chili poetry, chili cook-offs, chili recipes, and more—it's all in Frank Tolbert's quirky but authoritative history.



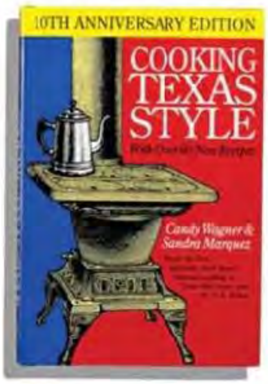
THE STAR OF TEXAS COOKBOOK (Doubleday, 1983) Compiled by the Junior League of Houston, this volume gives a glimpse into the cocktail- and canapés-filled world of Texas-style entertaining.



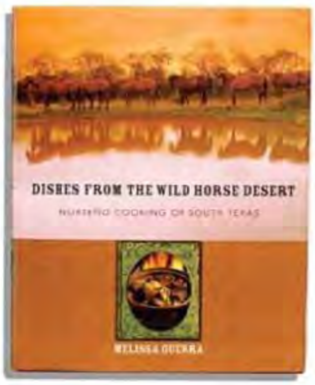
TEXAS BBQ (University of Texas Press, 2009) A stunning photographic tribute to the meat markets, smokehouses, and pit masters that make up Texas's Barbecue Nation.



EATS: A FOLK HISTORY OF TEXAS FOODS (Texas Christian University Press, 1989) Chapter one is titled "Tell Me What You Eat and I'll Tell You Where You Live". That aptly sums up this edifying read.



COOKING TEXAS STYLE (University of Texas Press, 1983) A cover-all-the-bases primer on Texas cooking with 300-plus recipes for everything from fried chicken to peach cobbler.



DISHES FROM THE WILD HORSE DESERT (Wiley, 2006) A loving portrait of the cooking traditions of South Texas and northern Mexico, including such marvels as fajitas and carne guisada.



TEXAS HOME COOKING (The Harvard Common Press, 1993) This friendly, endlessly useful cookbook by Cheryl and (Texas native) Bill Jamison is packed with 400 down-home recipes.

MICHAEL KRAUS



11. NEW ZION BARBECUE

THE TIME IS 5:30 ON A COOL Friday morning, and, as the old saying goes, it's as dark as the inside of a black cat. A little breeze riffles the tall pines lining a country road in Huntsville, a town of 35,000 in southeastern Texas, and an insomniac mockingbird sings somewhere deep in the shadows. Although every cell in my body is screaming for caffeine, I've somehow managed to show up on time at the small parish hall behind

New Zion Missionary Baptist Church. Soon a pair of headlights appears in the distance: Robert Polk has come, as he does three days a week, to fire up the barbecue pit.

Looking with resignation at the soot-covered, nine-foot-long metal drum cooker in front of him, the taciturn 44-year-old outlines the task ahead. "First, I have to shovel the old ashes out and put them in the trash," he tells me. "Then I put some oak logs in the firebox," he says, referring to the metal receptacle that serves as the pit's fireplace. He gets a roaring blaze going and lets it cool down before he scrapes the grill racks clean. Then he disappears into the kitchen and returns with four enormous beef briskets that have been sitting in the refrigerator overnight while a seasoning rub from a closely guarded recipe seeps into every fiber and pore. After heaving the meat onto the racks, Polk settles into a rusty metal folding chair a few feet away. The sun has come up, and the day is getting warmer; the pit radiates a slumber-inducing heat. "I'll keep an eye on it, but I might nod off a little," he says. He's entitled. By 11, when the customers start showing up, things will be too busy for so much as a coffee break.

New Zion—more generally referred to as "that church that sells barbecue"—is one of the most renowned yet improbable members of the Texas barbecue hall of fame. I've been making regular pilgrimages here from my home in Austin, a good three hours away, for nearly 15 years, and each time I do I wonder why I've waited so long to come back. Everything about the trip is gratifying: driving out through the remote region known as the Piney Woods, spotting the smoke rising above the trees, comparing notes with other customers ("How'd y'all hear about this place?"), and finally sitting down in a rickety little church building to devour some of the most tender, flavorful barbecue in the state.

The transaction is about as straightforward as it can be: the church cooks mouthwatering meats, sides, and pies, and the public queues up for the privilege of consuming them. That's all there is to it. Basically, the church runs a barbecue joint like thousands of others in Texas, but something about the whole experience far surpasses the sum of its exceedingly modest parts. Walking across the remnants of purple carpet that have been placed on the ground around the pit to keep the dust down, I feel as if I'd been hired as an extra for a Texas-based episode of *The Andy Griffith Show* or perhaps been asked to pose for a Norman Rockwell painting. A feeling of déjà vu—of having stepped back into that elusive, simpler time, a time when community and fellowship fueled the state's great barbecue tradition—envelops me, but with one key difference: this is for real.

IF YOU WANT TO FIND out more about the place that wags inevitably refer to as the Church of the Holy Smoke, it's a good idea to get acquainted with the Reverend Clinton Edison, the fatherly, 56-year-old pastor who presides over New Zion's congregation of 40 or so mostly elderly members. I ask him how the barbecues got started, and he treats me to an hour-long yarn.

As best he can figure, it was 1976—although

Regulars worship the mouthwatering meats, sides, and pies at this Texas institution

some say 1979—when a painting contractor named D. C. Ward volunteered to paint the church, to which he and his family belonged. At noon on the first day of work, his wife, Annie Mae, set up a smoker on the church lawn to barbecue some meat for Ward's lunch. Savory aromas wafted through the air. "Once she fired that pit up," Edison says, "people started stopping by and asking if they could buy some barbecue." Annie Mae sold a little meat, then a little more, and pretty soon it was all gone. "My poor husband never got anything to eat," she is *(continued on page 56)*

ANDRE BARANOWSKI

Pit master Robert Polk holds up a rack of smoked spareribs at New Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Huntsville, Texas, facing page.



PENNY DE LOS SANTOS (2)



The firebox, filled with burning oak wood, that fuels New Zion's metal drum smoker. Facing page, cook Clayton "Smitty" Smith and pit master Robert Polk take a break outside the parish hall, which doubles as a dining room.



KNOW YOUR TEXAS BARBECUE

The Lone Star State's distinctive style of slow-cooked, smoky barbecue originated in the mid-19th century, primarily in meat markets owned by German and Czech immigrants in Central Texas. (A few of those establishments, including the 109-year-old Kreuz Market, in Lockhart, are still going strong today.) Texas being cattle country, beef is king, and the flavorful brisket 1 (taken from the animal's chest, between the front legs) is by far the favorite cut. Texans separate themselves into two brisket preference camps: those who like it "fatty" (lush and loose, from muscles nearest the surface) and those who stick to "lean" (from deep muscles attached to the rib cage, which have a tight, uniform texture and less fat than a supermodel). Because a whole brisket has a fattier end and a leaner end, many places—like Snow's, in the central town of Lexington—serve both. Years ago, beef ribs the size of ax handles were a point of he-man pride among the pit masters at Texas barbecue joints; in recent years they have been muscled aside by daintier, moister pork spareribs 2 and baby back ribs. A good sausage 3 is hard to find. Most restaurants buy commercially made links, but some old-school spots, like Smitty's Market in Lockhart, still make their own and smoke them over wood. Chicken 4 is also a standby; smoked whole and usually sold by the half, it can be fantastic when it's right off the smoker, mahogany hued and moist. But, like lean brisket, chicken dries out fast. Cognoscenti never buy chicken after rush hour. As for sauce 5, regional variations, like the vinegar-spiked pepper sauce traditional to Central Texas's German-style joints, are vanishing. Nowadays, you find the same thick, sweet-tart sauce no matter where you go. —*P.S.*

(continued from page 53) quoted as saying in one of the yellowed news clippings tacked to the dining room's walls. The following Sunday, Annie Mae asked the pastor at the time whether she could sell barbecue and give the proceeds to the church. He handed her $50, and with that sum she started what could be described as the longest-running church fundraiser in the state's history.

The Wards handled the whole shebang at first, but before long most of the congregation was pitching in. Lunches and dinners were served on paper plates on the church lawn for a couple of years, until the health department cracked down and said they had to move the operation indoors. Fortunately, the church had raised enough money by then to build a wood-frame parish hall with room for a handful of tables and a kitchen. Things took off in a serious way: on some days, the line of barbecue supplicants stretched out the door to the church parking lot. Annie Mae and half a dozen church ladies would bustle around the kitchen in their print dresses and aprons, preparing side dishes and desserts: tender, unfussy pinto beans that had soaked and simmered for hours; potato salad made with Idaho russets, mashed by hand and flavored with plenty of dill pickle relish; pecan pie with a famously high pecan-to-goo ratio; eye-rollingly good, cinnamon-y sweet potato pie; and more. The recipes were Annie Mae's, and she resisted innumerable entreaties from customers that she share them. As Edison recalls, "She would say, 'It's not a secret; we just don't tell anyone.'"

It's with good reason that New Zion is known across Texas as the Church of the Holy Smoke

New Zion's pièce de résistance, though, was its barbecue, prepared in smoke-belching pits by D. C. Ward and the church men. In the early years, they used direct-heat smokers, in which the coals are placed right under the grill racks; it's a difficult, labor-intensive way to cook, as the meat can easily dry out if the cooks aren't careful, but done right, it delivers an intensely smoky taste. Later the church switched to indirect-heat barrel smokers, with the firebox off to the side. Beef brisket—loose textured and abundantly fatty even after it's been trimmed—was always the centerpiece, but there were also meaty pork ribs that you

ate using two hands, as you would corn on the cob, along with chicken, its skin burnished and golden and its meat falling from the bone in pearlescent hunks. Links of slow-smoked pork-and-beef sausage—made in nearby Bryan, Texas—added a salty, peppery kick to the ensemble.

Annie Mae and D. C. Ward did things their own way, which is to say, not in the style you might expect to find at most East Texas barbecue joints. For one thing, they cooked their brisket and ribs for a comparatively short time, not until it fell apart in tender shreds. For another, they didn't serve their brisket precut and slathered with the smash-up of condiments, from ketchup and worcestershire to barbecued meat drippings and black coffee, that's become the thick and hearty style of sauce now common across the state. Instead, the Wards cooked their meats for anywhere from four to six hours, until they were succulent and smoky, and served their sauce—the kind of thinnish, tomatoey, russet-colored brew shot through with vinegar that you used to find in Central Texas—on the side or, if the customer preferred, ladled onto the plate. The signature flavor came from Annie Mae's special mix of salt, pepper, and secret seasonings, which was not only rubbed on the meats but also added to the barbecue sauce and the beans, as it still is today. "About the only thing it's not in is the tea, and we're working on that," a cook named Clayton "Smitty" Smith tells me.

In 2004 the Wards, well into their 90s, retired to Houston, where they still live. Horace and Mae Archie, longtime church members, took over the management of the meals and oversaw them until last year, when Mae died of a heart attack. After that, Edison himself took on the job of running the business. "I told everybody we would keep it going as long as the Wards were alive or until the old building falls down," he said. Given a dwindling and aging congregation, he has had to hire help from outside the church in order to keep up with demand.

Over time and with practice, though, the group of six has coalesced into an efficient, tight-knit team. During the day I spent hanging around the kitchen, I watched with admiration as they sliced brisket, ladled sauce, toted steaming platters of sides, and weaved around one another with seeming extrasensory perception. Robert Polk, the pit master I met earlier this morning, comes in carrying a gorgeous brisket fresh from the smoker and hands it off to Smitty, who starts slicing it to make sandwiches and plates. The rest goes into a supersize crock pot, where it stays warm throughout service. Ann O'Bryant, a woman in her 40s who does most of the cooking, tells me that she prepares sides "just the way Mrs. Ward did", and Henry Ford, 16, the newest member of the team, moves quickly as he washes dishes and cleans up. Reverend Edison, under the watchful eye of his wife, Wyvonnia, who helps him manage the place, runs the cash register. He also comes in early to make a few desserts, having added his own, excellent buttermilk pie to the repertoire.









By around one o'clock, the rush has died down, and I come out from behind the counter where I've been shooed so that I'd be out of the way. I find Edison at a kitchen counter putting away leftovers. I have a couple of final questions for him, including one that you could almost call theological: What does the future hold?

"Well," he says, "our first goal is to give this place a good face-lift." I confess that I find this alarming. While I can't deny that the church hall could use an upgrade—the flooring is cracked, the curtains are faded—too much spiffing up could destroy the joint's scruffy charisma.

Perhaps Reverend Edison senses that I'm quietly freaking out. "We're not going to do much; people come for the history," he says, as he stretches a sheet of plastic wrap around a bowl of potato salad and puts it into the refrigerator. Aside from a little sprucing up, the reverend says, he and his flock plan to keep things exactly the same. Thank heaven. *—Patricia Sharpe, food writer and restaurant editor of* Texas Monthly

Clockwise, from top left: the prices of side dishes are marked on Styrofoam containers inside New Zion's dining room; a sign outside the main church building; shredded brisket and sausage sandwiches; one of New Zion's regular customers.

FACING PAGE: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PENNY DE LOS SANTOS (2); ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2)



12. Slow-Smoked Brisket

Brisket is the rightful king of Texas barbecue. The best part about this luscious cut of beef? You don't have to be a professional pit master to make terrific barbecued brisket at home. The secrets are a good spice rub and the judicious use of smoke and indirect heat. On the facing page: how to do it.

TEXAS



1 THE RUB Massage a 5-lb. brisket (ask butcher for the flat cut, with a half-inch layer of fat left on) with the barbecue rub shown on page 105. Refrigerate overnight.



2 THE FUEL Stuff crumpled newspaper under a charcoal chimney filled with lump hardwood charcoal, preferably oak or hickory. Light paper and let charcoal burn down to white and ashy coals.



3 THE SMOKE Dump hot coals over half of the bottom grate of a kettle grill and nestle in 3 wood chunks, preferably mesquite. The wood should smolder and smoke. Place lid over grill.



4 THE GRILL Open top grill vents and position lid so they're away from the fire. Open bottom vents. Let fire burn down until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the top vent reads 225°-250°.



5 THE HEAT Arrange a foil pan half full of water on the bottom grate, opposite the coals. Put the top grill grate into place and lay the brisket directly over the water bath.



6 THE SLOW-COOK Replenish fire with coals every hour or so to maintain a temperature of 225°-250°. Insert a thermometer into meat after 4–5 hours. When it reaches 160°, pull it off the grill.



7 THE WRAP Transfer brisket to a sheet of heavy-duty foil and pour ¾ cup warm lager beer over the meat. Wrap brisket in the foil to seal in the juices and beer.



8 THE LAST LEG Return foil-wrapped brisket to grill and cook, replenishing with coals, until meat is 190°, about 2 more hours. Let brisket rest on the cooled, uncovered grill for 1 more hour.



9 THE FINALE Arrange brisket fat side up on a cutting board. Using a sharp knife, slice brisket across the grain into ⅛" slices. Collect any juice and pour it over the sliced meat.

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (10)



13. OKRA

You either love okra or you hate it. That most Texans stand firmly in the first camp is proof positive that the state is as much of the South as it is of the Southwest. All across Texas but particularly in the eastern part, you find okra in gumbos and in vegetable stews, just as you do in Louisiana and other okra-loving locales, where cooks rely on the soup-thickening properties of those mucilaginous green pods. Okra also appears in Texan potluck spreads and on cafeteria steam tables, sliced and stewed with tomatoes or thrown together with summer corn and pimiento in succotash.

Ask a lot of Texans how they like their okra best, though, and they'll tell you fried. Cooks slice the pods into chubby rounds, roll them in cornmeal, and float them in bubbling oil until they're crisp; the high heat transforms the raw okra's sticky interior into a creamy mouthful. Strewn with salt, this deep-fried version is a close compadre of ice-cold beer at many a Texas roadhouse and neighborhood bar. Chefs at upmarket places often opt for grilling or pan-frying. "Our pan-fried okra is so popular that the dish has taken on a life of its own," says Sharon Hage, of the Dallas restaurant York Street, who serves it over a tangy green tomato salad. "We have it only in summer, but people ask about it all year."

Of course, Hage is just affirming a bedrock Texan truth: okra is synonymous with summer. This cousin of cotton thrives in the dog days of the season, and it has long been a staple of kitchen gardens, where home cooks grow prolific local cultivars. "Heirloom varieties, like hill country red, that have a red or burgundy color have become popular recently," says David Rodriguez, a horticulturist with Texas A&M University. And then there's longhorn okra, a variety that produces pods on a truly Texan scale—up to a foot in length, in some cases—with elegantly tapered tips resembling the horns of a steer.

In the off-season, Texans reach for pickled okra: it holds its crunch, and the astringent vinegar does away with the vegetable's characteristic ooze. Some Texans buy jarred versions of the stuff; Talk O' Texas, the 60-year-old San Angelo–based company, sells more than 300,000 cases a year. But many still put up their own, just as Texas's first culinary ambassador to the White House, Zephyr Wright, used to do for Lyndon Johnson and his family in the 1960s. That way, they can have a firm, green bite of summer all year round.

MICHAEL KRAUS



PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

14. Serious Salsas In 1991 SAVEUR contributor and then-food editor of the *Austin Chronicle* Robb Walsh wrote an article for *Chile Pepper* magazine that called Austin the hot sauce capital of Texas. A writer in San Antonio wrote back and said bull. And so, the Austin Chronicle Hot Sauce Festival was born. That first year, a hot sauce from Austin won, but it didn't much matter: the rest of Texas wanted in. Today more than 15,000 people from all across the country descend on Waterloo Park to taste hundreds of hot sauces, pico de gallos, and "special variety" condiments (dried pepper sauces, mango-habanero salsas, and other entries that don't fit neatly into the standard "red" and "green" categories) from home cooks, professional chefs, and commercial bottlers. "The homemade ones are always the best," says Walsh. Pictured, a lively chopped-tomato salsa that was a finalist in 2008.



PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

15. Boggy Creek Farm

I've been to hundreds of farmers' markets, but Boggy Creek Farm, in Austin, beats them all. Actually, Boggy Creek is a farm that turns into a market twice a week. On five unlikely acres surrounded by houses and schools less than three miles from the state capitol building, rows of sunflowers and herbs beat a path from the street to a wood farmhouse. Beyond the house are fields planted with okra, squash, eggplants, sweet corn, cabbage, and all sorts of "weird little radishes", to borrow the words of Carol Ann Sayle (right), who started the farm with her husband, Larry Butler (above), 18 years ago. The house's porch is festooned with beat-up gardening gloves—totems of a hard, good life. I've sat on that porch with Larry as he leaned back in a chair with a BB gun resting across his knees, guarding against the squirrels that steal fruit from his fig trees. I've dined on a bounty of vegetables in the spartan farmhouse kitchen at a table covered with seeds. "Customers think that we are living their dream, and they want to do what we're doing," Carol Ann said to me once. I know what they mean. —*Deborah Madison, author of* Local Flavors: Cooking and Eating from America's Farmers' Markets *(Broadway Books, 2002)*



ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

16. Desserts with Attitude Texas home cooks have a legendary sweet tooth, as evidenced by the state's early cookbooks, which practically overflow with baked-goods recipes. Buttery kolaches (top left) are yeast rolls filled with fruit preserves and cottage cheese; drop biscuits top a blueberry-cherry cobbler (top right); Dallas chef Stephan Pyles's Heaven and Hell cake (middle right) consists of angel's food and devil's food cake, peanut butter mousse, and chocolate ganache; grapefruit slices garnish a citrus-spiked sheet cake (bottom right); former first lady Laura Bush's chewy cowboy cookies are packed with coconut, oats, and chocolate chips; and crunchy-gooey pecan pie (middle left) is a favorite in this pecan-producing state. R W


STEPHAN PYLES

17. STEPHAN PYLES

To anyone familiar with Southwestern cuisine today, it almost sounds like a cliché: hickory-grilled catfish served atop a pool of smoked-pepper butter sauce with a black bean relish in a tomatillo husk. But back in 1984, when the chef Stephan Pyles introduced that dish at Routh Street Cafe, in Dallas, it came as nothing less than an epiphany. Here was catfish, previously the province of small-town diners and ramshackle roadhouses, given star billing on an expensive, fixed-price menu. Here were black beans and tomatillo, foods I'd seldom seen outside Tex-Mex cantinas, presented with the sort of panache normally reserved for French nouvelle cuisine. I was a restaurant critic in Dallas at the time and instantly became enamored with what Pyles and a few other chefs were doing with ingredients that had long been a part of everyday life in the ranchlands and high deserts of the American Southwest: hickory and mesquite, chiles, beans, Gulf Coast fish, and so on. Such was my enthusiasm that one skeptical writer at *Texas Monthly* accused me of wearing "red chile–tinted glasses". I even wrote a three-part series for the *Dallas Times Herald* called "The Dawn of a New Cuisine".

That claim may sound grandiose today, given that foods like chipotle, cilantro, and fajitas have become as much a part of the national vernacular as ketchup, but what Stephan Pyles and his cohorts accomplished in the early 1980s—namely, the elevation of those traditional Southwestern ingredients to the realm of haute cuisine—was revolutionary. It was also in keeping with the times. In the early 1980s America was going through a wild culinary adolescence. Up to that moment, upscale dining in most parts of the country had meant staid, Continental-style fare: shrimp cocktail, hearts of palm salad, chateaubriand with béarnaise sauce. Suddenly, chefs were finding inspiration closer to home. On the West Coast, Wolfgang Puck and Alice Waters were combining classical French technique and fresh local ingredients in a newly minted California cuisine. In Texas, the impulse was similar, but the ingredients and traditions put chefs there on a path all their own; if Waters revered baby greens and garlic scapes, Pyles and company went for big flavors and bold pairings of a kind that would become emblematic of the era, and of Texas.

The Texans who led the way, a group that came to be called the Gang of Five, went on to become some of the Southwest's brightest culinary stars: the cook and food writer Anne Greer McCann, whose book *Cuisine of the American Southwest* is the movement's official manual; Dean Fearing (see page 24), who was chef at the vaunted Mansion on Turtle Creek, in Dallas, for 21 years; Avner Samuel, the Mansion chef before Fearing; Robert Del Grande (see page 24) of Cafe Annie, a Houston institution; and Pyles. Twenty-five years ago, they were all audacious young chefs on the cusp of a culinary trend that would eventually reverberate across America. But it was Pyles, the group's only native Texan, who would remain closer than any of them to the roots of the Southwest's cooking traditions. What's more, over the past 25 years, even as Southwestern cuisine has spread far beyond the region and become clichéd in many quarters, Pyles has continually rethought and refined his approach to come up with something fresh and new.

A fifth-generation Texan, Stephan Pyles, now 57, grew up in Big Spring, a hot, dusty town in the Panhandle, where he worked in the kitchen of the truck stop his parents owned. He left home at the age of 18 to study music at East Texas State University before doing stints at a few small restaurants in Dallas. In 1981, he was hired as a chef's assistant at the Great Chefs of France cooking school, a four-weekend program held annually on the grounds of the Robert Mondavi Winery, in California's Napa Valley, where he returned to work each year for several more years. There, Pyles became fully versed in French technique under the tutelage of such visiting masters as Michel Guérard, Pierre Troisgros, and Georges Blanc.

When he opened Routh Street Cafe with his business partner John Dayton in 1983, Pyles made clear right away that he was going to do things differently. In a sleek, minimalist space—with glazed pink and gray walls and exposed steel ducts—he put out food that

Pyles went for big flavors and bold pairings of a kind that would become emblematic of the era

told patrons they were in the hands of a classically trained chef but still firmly planted on Texas soil. Pyles infused his demi-glace with the earthy essence of ancho chiles; he piqued his beurre blanc with smoked tomatoes and garlic; he offered a lobster enchilada that was essentially stuffed with lobster à l'américaine (lobster cooked with cream, tomatoes, garlic, shallots, and herbs) emboldened by serrano

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

Chef Stephan Pyles (facing page, right), of the Dallas restaurant bearing his name, with cook Antonio Oviedo (left) and executive chef Tim Byres.

chiles. Pyles served that last dish in a tortilla folded into a diamond and drizzled artfully with red pepper–infused crème fraîche. It was a sophisticated presentation that would later be copied from coast to coast, as would the blue cornmeal crust he used for a version of his catfish that was plated with a sauce of golden tomato and Mexican mint marigold, an herb otherwise known as Texas tarragon.

The Southwest, and especially Texas, was taking its rightful place in the country's culinary firmament—an ascent helped along, for better or worse, by a little cultural phenomenon called *Dallas*, the hugely popular television show that ran from 1978 to 1991. Cajun-style blackened catfish was shoved aside as the trend du jour, and chefs all over the country started to add cilantro pesto to chicken breasts and smoked-tomato salsa to grilled steaks. Just about anything that could be wrapped in a tortilla was ripe for reinvention. By the mid-1990s, the preoccupation with Southwestern cuisine among chefs at high-end restaurants was beginning to diminish, much as the Cajun fad had before it, but Pyles stuck to it and even managed to breathe bold new life into the cuisine he helped define.

FOR PYLES, SOUTHWESTERN cooking was the opposite of a fad. Although many of his contemporaries had since roamed off into other culinary realms, he found himself wanting to dive even more deeply into the flavors and imagery and lore of his home region. "By the end [at Routh Street Cafe] I was doing food that didn't fit with the refined décor," he says. "I wanted to bust out into bigger flavors." He and Dayton opened a more casual offshoot, Baby Routh, along with two restaurants in Minneapolis, Dayton's hometown, but after Routh Street closed, in 1993, the partnership dissolved.

So, in 1994, Pyles opened Star Canyon, a place that positively shouted Texas, right down to the terra-cotta tiles, barbed-wire accents, and open hearth, which was straight out of the mammoth ranches of the Old West. Pyles unleashed his inner cowboy, creating one of his signature entrées: the cowboy rib eye, a 24-ounce bone-in mesquite-grilled steak, topped with a Medusa's tangle of crisp-fried, chile-dusted onion rings. He also invented the tamale tart: a soft shell of corn masa, flavored with red bell peppers and ancho chiles, filled with a savory roasted garlic custard; on top of it all sits a mound of crabmeat infused with the sting of serrano chiles. Bold tasting and long on swagger, it telegraphs Texas's bounty. It was here, too, that he created Heaven and Hell, a dessert of truly Texan proportions composed of alternating layers of angel's food and devil's food cake separated by creamy peanut butter mousse and enrobed in chocolate ganache.

Star Canyon was a hit, and it led to a number of lucrative spin-offs. But in 2000 Pyles stunned the restaurant world by walking away from the industry altogether. "I was burned out," he says. "I needed some personal time." Over the course of the next five years, he traveled to Spain, Morocco, Turkey, and Greece and spent extended sojourns in South America.

What Pyles did after he returned to Dallas sparked an evolutionary leap for Southwestern cuisine, which until then had mostly been an assemblage of local ingredients harnessed to classical French models of cooking. Pyles's travels had given him a visceral sense of the many subtle organic connections linking Texas foods with the far-flung cuisines of the world. While Southwestern-style cooking had become tired and one-dimensional in other parts of the country, Pyles was poised to reveal its hidden depths.

What Pyles did after he returned to Dallas sparked an evolutionary leap for Southwestern cuisine

When he jumped back into the fray in 2005, with a new Dallas restaurant that bore his name, his food reflected the cooking traditions of not only Texas, the Southwest, and Mexico but also South America and the Mediterranean, among other regions. He called his updated approach New Millennium Southwestern—a name that jibed with the trend toward fusion food that was prominent at the time (and one he repeats now with some embarrassment). And yet, what Pyles gave diners at his new, namesake restaurant amounted to much more than facile mashups of disparate flavors and styles; his menu reflected the maturity of a confident chef who could recognize the complementary aspects of multiple cuisines.

At Stephan Pyles, there's little question that we have, indeed, entered a new millennium. In the center of the huge space is a glass-enclosed, 1,500-square-foot kitchen—Pyles calls it the jewel box—that can be seen from every corner of the dining room. The main attractions of that kitchen are a wood-burning grill and a rotisserie; they are the forges for the bold, smoky flavors that have become a hallmark of the restaurant. The menu features seafood dishes that evoke Pyles's South American travels, including a ceviche of lobster with roasted vanilla–scented fennel and kampachi with agave nectar and guanabana. One evening I had a gazpacho made with crunchy almonds and frozen grapes; an alternate version of that dish had smoked tomatoes and sweet, earthy beets. On another visit my pork osso buco braised with guajillo chiles arrived alongside a naturally sweet butternut squash polenta, while a friend's beef tenderloin came with sweet potato chilaquiles garnished with a mole of pineapple, spices, herbs, nuts, ground tortillas, and four types of chile. Was this pan–South American? Tex-Latin fusion? Eventually I forgot all about trying to assign a name to the kind of cuisine Pyles was conceiving. Whatever it was, it was brilliant.

STEPHAN PYLES the restaurant is still going strong, but Stephan Pyles the chef is restless again. He told me recently that he thinks he's strayed too far from his roots. "We're not utilizing a lot of the ingredients I love," he said. So, later this year, if all goes as planned, he'll channel his more globally inclined impulses into a new restaurant called Samar, where he intends to create small plates reflecting the cuisines of India, the eastern Mediterranean, and Spain. That way, he can rededicate the menu at Stephan Pyles to what he calls "more refined Southwestern": a pared-down, elegant cuisine that's shorn of some of the genre's more over-the-top traits—a return to the fundamentals.

He may even create another restaurant like Star Canyon in a smaller format. He's open to other possibilities as well, but he wants never to lose sight of why he got into the business in the first place and why, years later, he went back to it: the sheer pleasure of cooking. Still, he's somewhat perplexed about how to categorize this new style he's cultivating. "I do think New Millennium Southwestern sounds silly," he admits, "but I don't know what to call it." *—Michael Bauer, executive food and wine editor and restaurant critic for the* San Francisco Chronicle

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

The mesquite-grilled, bone-in cowboy rib eye, facing page, served with chile-dusted onion rings at Stephan Pyles's restaurant.



TEXAS

18. DRINKS THAT BEAT THE HEAT



BOOK CLUB SANGRIA This is serious sangria, from the good ladies of the Junior League of Houston. It's brandy and red wine infused with peaches and pineapple and brightened with ginger ale.



KENTUCKY CLUB MARGARITA Though this bold shaken cocktail originated in Mexico at Juárez's Kentucky Club, across the border from El Paso, Texans now claim it as their own.



MICHELADA To all those who say you can't improve on an ice-cold beer, we submit the michelada: a tart-savory eye-opener of beer, Tabasco, worcestershire, and fresh lime juice.



LONGHORN BULL SHOT Here is the cattleman's answer to savory cocktails like the bloody mary: beef stock, vodka, Tabasco, and lime juice served over ice. It'll knock the dust off your spurs.



CUCUMBER COOLER This refreshing mix of vodka, cucumber, thyme, and simple syrup was born at the Gage Hotel in Marathon, where it is traditionally made with Savvy Vodka from Austin.



CHICO Blackberry liqueur gives this jewel of a cocktail, which was popular in cantinas along the Texas–Mexico border during World War II, its garnet color. Tequila or gin gives it its kick. W R

MICHAEL KRAUS



19. CRAWFISH FEASTS

The Vietnamese immigrants who started settling along Texas's coast in the 1970s took to the area just fine; they came from a seafood-loving culture, and, in fact, a good many were fishermen or shrimpers back home. No surprise, then, that boiled crawfish are a main attraction in the food court of the Hong Kong City Mall, in Houston, whose metropolitan area is now home to the third-largest Southeast Asian population in the United States. Amid dim sum restaurants, bubble tea vendors, and phở joints, a seafood stall called Crawfish & Beignets sells the crustaceans—harvested each spring in Beaumont, in the state's far southeastern corner—by the pound, boiled with Cajun spices. You buy a bagful, pour a mess of them on a communal table, and (following this kid's cue) get to work. Ⓡ

LANDON NORDEMAN



20. HOME-STATE PRIDE

Neda Mirkalai, a line and pastry cook at the Houston restaurant Reef, was raised in Alief, a town just west of the city, 21 years ago. Her mother emigrated to Texas from the Philippines; her father was born in Iran. And yet Mirkalai is as pure-blooded a Texan as they come. "I wanted the 'brand' of the state," she says of her tattoo, which a local tattoo artist named Corey Rogers custom-designed for her when she was 17. "And I liked the idea of keeping Texas close to my heart."

LANDON VORDEMAN



ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

21. Superlative Sides Texas cooks lay claim to a rich repertoire of side dishes that reflect regional tastes and ethnic traditions as vividly as the main courses they accompany, whether it's a mess of barbecue or a classic Tex-Mex platter. Tex-Mex-style skillet corn bread (top left) is studded with whole corn and chopped jalapeños; radishes star in a classic coleslaw (top right); bacon and parsley play off each other in German-style potato salad (middle right); long-cooked collard greens are flavored with pork (bottom right); stir-fried Chinese broccoli (bottom left) are enlivened with Fresno chiles; and frijoles a la charra (middle left) are pinto beans slow-simmered with pork and chiles. R

22. VAQUERO COOKING

When I pulled in to the grass parking lot behind St. Ann's Catholic Church in Linn, Texas, a lot of guys in cowboy hats were building fires on the ground. Melissa Guerra, a cookbook author who comes from a ranching family that goes back eight generations in this corner of South Texas, had invited me to be a judge at the 26th annual Linn–San Manuel Cook-Off, the most authentic competition in Texas dedicated to vaquero cooking—Mexican-American cowboy cuisine. It's also the primary fund-raiser for St. Ann's and for the school system and fire departments of the towns of Linn and San Manuel.

The vaqueros who rounded up cattle along the border during the late 19th century adopted the practice of grilling meats and cooking food over burning hardwoods. This competition is a celebration of that smoke-scented Tex-Mex legacy. A few feet from Guerra and me, beef ribs were sizzling over mesquite coals. Not far from that, a cabrito (baby goat) was split and splayed over a grate-topped steel box filled with glowing embers. Carne guisada (beef stew) bubbled in an iron pot suspended over a fire pit, which was tended to by two burly guys in matching pink shirts. In another iron pot nearby, chili was simmering, filling the air with the scent of chile piquín, the tiny pepper that grows wild all over southern Texas and is, along with mesquite, essential to vaquero food. I also saw people baking pan de campo, the traditional vaquero flat bread, in cast-iron dutch ovens. One of the fellows who was entered in the fajita category handed me a strip of perfectly seared, medium-rare meat from the center portion of a skirt steak. A far cry from the overdone fajita meat I've had at many Tex-Mex joints, it had a juicy, beefy flavor that primed me for what was to come.

The categories in the Linn–San Manuel Cook-Off represent the cornerstones of the cooking style native to the mesquite-dotted deserts and ranchlands straddling the Rio Grande: fajitas, chili, frijoles (beans), cabrito, carne guisada, beef and pork ribs, and baked goods (including a vaquero corn bread often studded with jalapeños and whole corn). Guerra was assigned to judge the desserts and a couple of other categories. Happily, I drew carne guisada and cabrito.

Great carne guisada is made with strips of sirloin seared lightly for color and then simmered in a tomato and jalapeño–flavored gravy. The beef should taste like steak, with a perfectly tender texture, but it shouldn't fall apart too easily. The sauce should be spicy and thickened just enough that it looks like gravy. Out of a dozen stews, my fellow judges and I narrowed the field to four stellar versions, which we tasted again and again, trying to break the tie.

There were 11 cabritos entered. The best one I tasted had crunchy skin concealing

The crunchy skin of the milk-fed cabrito concealed tender white meat that pulled away from the backbone in long, tender strands

juicy, snow-white loin meat that pulled away from the backbone in long, tender strands. The contrast between the delicate meat of the milk-fed baby goat and the charred tang of the mesquite smoke was unforgettable—a flavor unique to northern Mexico and the Rio Grande Valley. My fellow judges stuck leftover cabrito in shopping bags brought along for the purpose; I cursed my unpreparedness. When I met up with Guerra after the judging, I raved about the cabrito and she raved about pequín jelly.

From where I was standing, it seemed a good, spirited competition, though in truth, Guerra told me, this annual gathering of ranch folk is more of a community feast than a cooking contest. Sure enough, by the time all the judging was over, everybody was still too busy eating to pay much attention to exactly who'd won what. —*Robb Walsh*

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

Jaime Flores (left) and Xavier Gonzales, members of one of the 20 teams competing in the 26th annual Linn–San Manuel Cook-Off, a daylong competition and charity event dedicated to vaquero (Mexican cowboy) cooking. The men hoped to take home a prize for their carne guisada, or beef stew, which they cooked the traditional way: in a cast-iron pot suspended over a mesquite fire.


Chorizo De San Manuel, Inc.
Ranch



23. ROUGHNECK GOURMANDS

Texans don't let anything stand in the way of a home-cooked meal. A case in point is the well-fed crew on the Rowan Gorilla III oil rig, a 22,500-ton mobile platform that operates in the Gulf of Mexico. The Texas-based company that owns this rig brings in provisions (by boat) from terra firma once a week. Tuesdays are steak days: here, cook Donald Brown prepares Black Angus rib-eye steaks marinated in olive oil, garlic, herbs, and Cajun spices for 170 workers on a king-size charcoal grill that's kept on one of the rig's four decks. When the steaks are done, he'll take them into the galley, where two other cooks have prepared a lunch that also includes fried shrimp, salmon filets, and potatoes au gratin.

LANDON NORDEMAN



24. MESQUITE



MESQUITE GRILLING was a plot by Texas ranchers to get a bunch of Californians to clear their rangeland for nothing—or so went the joke that made the rounds in Texas back when folks on the West Coast first went crazy for Southwest cuisine and the sweet, tangy flavor of mesquite smoke.

Unloved by cattlemen, hardy mesquite was a favorite of the region's native peoples. They ground the tough little tree's seed pods to make flour, they wove the bark into sturdy cloth, and the thorns were handy for needles. In the northern Mexican desert, Spanish herdsmen began the practice of burning down mesquite wood and cooking over the aromatic coals. Cabrito al pastor—baby goat cooked over mesquite coals, "in the style of the shepherd"—is still the signature dish of the Mexican city of Monterrey.

In the 1980s, Texas chefs exalted that cooking style, and soon everyone found out what *norteño* cooks had long known: mesquite smoke, compared with that of other woods, burns hot and quick and, because of the bark's rich mineral deposits, gives food a flavor like no other. Soon, mesquite-grilled steaks and chops were on lots of menus, and mesquite-burning grills were installed in fine restaurants, in Tex-Mex fajita joints, and even at upscale hamburger chains like Houston's Becks Prime. In 1979, Ranchmen's Manufacturing of Dallas, one of the large companies that bought and sold mesquite wood at the time, had around 1,000 customers. By 1984, the company had more than 12,000.



The American love affair with mesquite is all the more interesting when you consider that mesquite grilling wasn't common in Texas until relatively recently. Outside of river valleys, there were very few mesquite trees in South and West Texas before the Civil War; those areas were an ocean of prairie grass. Wildfires and the hooves of millions of buffalo kept the brush under control until cattle ranchers and their wide-roaming herds spread mesquite seeds far and wide. Today, the trees cover more than 56 million acres in South and West Texas, and, because a new tree can grow from a tiny piece of root left in the ground, mesquite will be plentiful for a long time to come. So, fire up the grill, and burn all the mesquite you like. —*Robb Walsh*

MICHAEL KRAUS

THE GUIDE TEXAS

Dinner for two with drinks and tip:
INEXPENSIVE **UNDER $25** MODERATE **$25–$60** EXPENSIVE **OVER $60**



MAP BY PETER CLSACK; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

WHERE TO EAT

ABACUS *4511 McKinney Avenue, Dallas (214/559-3111; www.kentrathbun.com). Expensive.* Chef Kent Rathbun is a force to be reckoned with: he's opened six popular restaurants across Texas in the past ten years. His first, the opulent, globally inspired Abacus, in Dallas, is still his best, with dishes like grilled prawns with poached salsify and chipotle-rubbed duck breast.

AL-T'S SEAFOOD AND STEAKHOUSE *244 Highway 124, Winnie (409/296-9818). Moderate.* This Tex-Cajun roadhouse—located 60 miles east of Houston—is the place to try hand-battered and fried alligator, fiery gumbos, and the house favorite, Dirty Herbie: dirty rice and crawfish étouffé topped with cubed, grilled rib-eye steak.

CAFE ANNIE *1728 Post Oak Boulevard, Houston (713/840-1111; www.cafe-annie.com). Expensive.* Robert Del Grande's 29-year-old temple of haute Southwestern dining is about to be reborn as RDG Bar Annie. We just hope his killer fries remain on the menu.

CAFÉ CENTRAL *109 North Oregon Street, El Paso (915/545-2233; www.cafecentral.com). Expensive.* This is border-town dining at its most refined. Chef Armando Pomales, an El Paso native, makes a succulent bacon-wrapped prawn brochette and a silky cream of green chile soup. The 1,000-bottle wine list is one of Texas's best.

CASA JURADO *4772 Doniphan Drive, El Paso (915/833-1151). Moderate.* This popular, laid-back restaurant features the border-spanning fare of Texas's far western corner, a hearty blend of Texan, northern Mexican, and New Mexican culinary traditions.

CHRIS MADRID'S *1900 Blanco Road, San Antonio (210/735-3552; www.chrismadrids.com). Inexpensive.* The sloppy, supersize burgers at this gas station turned cantina are some of the best we've ever had. Don't shy away from the "macho tostada burger": refried beans, crushed tostada chips, cheddar, and salsa atop a half-pound burger.

COOPER'S OLD TIME PIT BAR-B-QUE *604 West Young Street, Llano (325/247-5713; www.coopersbbq.com). Inexpensive.* Unlike most Texas barbecue (which is cooked by indirect heat), the juicy brisket, pork chops, and beef ribs at this 45-year-old institution are cooked directly over hot coals in an outdoor oak-fired grill the length of an RV. Absolutely worth the two-hour drive from Austin.

DA MARCO *1520 Westheimer Road, Houston (713/807-8857; www.damarcohouston.com). Expensive.* Marco Wiles, a native of the northern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, is hands down Texas's most beloved Italian chef. His whole branzino roasted in a wood-fired brick pizza oven and homemade butternut squash tortelli demonstrate why.

FEARING'S *2121 McKinney Avenue, Dallas (214/922-4848; www.fearingsrestaurant.com). Expensive.* Since 2007, Texas's favorite celebrity chef, Dean Fearing, has served his signature "bold flavors, no borders" cuisine at the Dallas Ritz-Carlton. The menu ranges far and wide, from five-spiced hamachi to antelope with parsnip purée.

FEAST *219 Westheimer Road, Houston (713/529-7788; www.feasthouston.com). Expensive.* This is an offbeat ode to nose-to-tail dining, with dishes like braised lamb tongue and crisp pork cheeks with roasted shallots. As for the excellent bubble and squeak, chalk it up to the Britain-born chefs.

FIVE SIXTY BY WOLFGANG PUCK *300 Reunion Boulevard East, Dallas (214/741-5560). Expensive.* The newest addition to Wolfgang Puck's global empire hovers over Dallas in the Jetsons-esque, 50-story Reunion Tower. The pan-Asian menu runs to

LOCAL GEMS

PHARMACY LUNCH counters, those fading institutions of mid-20th-century Americana, are still going strong in parts of Texas. At **Nau's Enfield Drug Store**, in Austin (1115 West Lynn Street; 512/476-1221), diners perch at a sea green counter for made-to-order lunches of hefty BLTs—one of the 26 kinds of sandwich on order—beautifully grilled burgers, and towering ice cream sundaes. Despite the proliferation of chain drugstores in the region, the owners of the 71-year-old business say they have no intention of turning off the griddle or selling off their toothpaste and vitamin inventory anytime soon. *—Liz Pearson*



lacquered Chinese duckling and crispy General Tso's quail.

FONDA SAN MIGUEL *2330 West North Loop, Austin (512/459-4121; www.fondasanmiguel.com). Moderate.* One of the happy consequences of the high-end Southwestern food boom is that it pulled regional Mexican cooking up along with it. Chef Miguel Ravago's urbane restaurant (whose menu the Mexican food authority Diana Kennedy had a hand in creating) is a case in point: the slow-roasted pork al pastor is some of the best you can find anywhere.

GOODE COMPANY SEAFOOD *2621 Westpark Drive, Houston (713/523-7154; www.goodecompany.com). Expensive.* Jim Goode is a real impresario: since he opened his popular Houston barbecue joint in 1977, he's launched a taqueria and hamburger stand and even a specialty foods company. His finest achievement is this seafood restaurant, located in a converted railroad car near the West University neighborhood. The chunky Mexican seafood cocktail is unbeatable.

H & H CAR WASH *701 East Yandell Drive, El Paso (915/533-1144). Inexpensive.* Businessmen, families, and food tourists line the counter at this 51-year-old coffee shop and car wash—don't let the strange pairing throw you off—known for its perfectly seasoned carne picada, chiles rellenos, and great breakfast tacos.

HONG KONG CITY MALL *11205 Bellaire Boulevard, Houston (www.hkcitymall.com). Inexpensive.* The 20-plus eating options at this mall—one of the largest Asian indoor shopping centers in the country—can be overwhelming; we recommend heading straight to Crawfish & Beignets, in the food court, for boiled crawfish seasoned with Cajun spices.

HUYNH *912 St. Emanuel Street, Houston (713/224-8964). Moderate.* This friendly new restaurant has quickly earned a reputation for serving some of Houston's best Vietnamese food. The charbroiled pork spring rolls and the duck salad with ginger and fish sauce are already legendary.

INDIKA *516 Westheimer Road, Houston (713/524-2170; www.indikausa.com). Expensive.* Chef Anita Jaisinghani's innovative restaurant is the brightest light on Houston's vibrant Indian restaurant scene. Standouts include grouper with mustard–beet curry and chicken with brown basmati khichri (spiced rice and lentils).

KIM SON *2001 Jefferson Street, Houston (713/222-2461; www.kimson.com). Inexpensive.* In 1982 the Vietnamese immigrant Kim Su Tran La (known locally as Mama La) opened Kim Son, a sprawling restaurant in downtown Houston, featuring superb renditions of lemongrass chicken and black pepper crab. Today the La family owns 18 restaurants, but the original remains our favorite.

KREUZ MARKET *619 North Colorado Street, Lockhart (512/398-2361; www.kreuzmarket.com). Inexpensive.* One of the oldest and best barbecue businesses in the state has relatively new digs, owing to a family dispute that transformed the original location into a place called Smitty's. No matter; the smoke-tinged brisket and jalapeño–cheese sausages are as good as ever.

LIBERTY BAR *328 East Josephine Street, San Antonio (210/227-1187; www.liberty-bar.com). Expensive.* This saloon turned restaurant, in operation since 1890, has buckets of charm (the floors and walls tilt seriously), but inventive home cooking, like chiles pickled with ginger and pot roast with homemade bread, is the real draw.

MI TIERRA *218 Produce Row, San Antonio (210/225-1262; www.mitierracafe.com). Moderate.* San Antonians' round-the-clock cravings for homemade tortillas, steamy bowls of menudo (tripe soup), and pork tamales are more than satisfied by this landmark Tex-Mex café and bakery, which is open 24/7 and often features mariachi singers.

NEW ZION BBQ *2601 Montgomery Road, Huntsville (936/294-0884). Inexpensive.* This small Baptist church in East Texas serves some of the state's most heavenly barbecue: namely, slow-cooked brisket, ribs, and sausage. Call ahead before making a trip; it's open only three days a week.

PERINI RANCH STEAKHOUSE *3002 FM 89, Buffalo Gap (325/572-3339; www.periniranch.com). Expensive.* When it comes to beef, it doesn't get more local or any better than cattleman Tom Perini's steak house, which stands on the grounds of his family's 57-year-old, 640-acre working ranch.

RAINBOW LODGE *2011 Ella Boulevard, Houston (713/861-8666; www.rainbow-lodge.com). Expensive.* Randy Rucker, who dabbled in molecular gastronomy and ran an underground supper club before landing at this recently refurbished, century-old log cabin, is Texas's culinary enfant terrible. Seafood is his new kick here; try the lobster with grapefruit and avocado or the amberjack tiradito (a Peruvian take on sashimi) with cilantro pistou.

RATHER SWEET BAKERY AND CAFÉ *249 East Main Street, Fredericksburg (830/990-0498; www.rathersweet.com). Inexpensive.* Cookbook author Rebecca Rather (who earned her stripes working as a Houston pastry chef) makes the flakiest, fluffiest kolaches (Czech-style sweet and savory pastries) we've ever tasted. Settle into her cozy café for inspired takes on comfort food classics like chicken pot pie and chilaquiles.

REEF *2600 Travis Street, Houston (713/526-8282; www.reefhouston.com). Expensive.* In an 8,500-square-foot former Chevy dealership, chef Bryan Caswell has created a bright, shiny temple of imaginatively prepared seafood, with dishes like crab claw with mustard cream sauce and slow-baked salmon in chili oil.

LE RÊVE *152 East Pecan Street, San Antonio (210/212-2221; www.restaurantlereve.com). Expensive.* The French-trained chef Andrew Weissman single-handedly put San Antonio on the fine-dining map: since 1998, he's opened four restaurants there, and he's got two more on the way. His creative French fare at Le Rêve, which features the likes of poached oysters with wasabi



LOCAL SWAG

IN 2008 Hurricane Ike gave a beating to the oyster beds that have long thrived along Texas's Gulf Coast, but the oystermen of Galveston Bay (see page 48) have bounced back. For proof of that, go no farther than **Gilhooley's** in San Leon (222 Ninth Street; 281/339-3813; the sign pictured above features an unorthodox spelling of the name). The popular seafood restaurant, housed in a clapboard building that juts into the bay, serves platter after platter of local oysters topped with parmesan and grilled on the half shell over pecan and oak. That's Gulf Coast eating at its best.

LANDON NORDEMAN

beurre blanc and braised cucumbers, is as exciting as ever.

SARTIN'S *3520 Nederland Avenue, Nederland (409/721-9420; www.sartinsnederland.com). Moderate.* Many Texans know Sartin's—a venerated coastal restaurant near the Louisiana border—for its famous crab seasoning. The food itself deserves equally widespread fame; "barbecued" crabs dusted with that spicy seasoning, seafood sandwiches on buttery Texas toast, stuffed jalapeños, and more.

SHINSEI *7713 Inwood Road, Dallas (214/352-0005; www.shinseirestaurant.com). Expensive.* The fact that Lynae Fearing and Tracy Rathbun, the spouses, respectively, of Dallas chefs Dean Fearing and Kent Rathbun, operate this three-year-old restaurant has generated plenty of buzz. But sushi chef Shuji "Elvis" Sugawara is a bona fide talent; witness his signature dish: a mackerel sashimi with yuzu, shiso, olive oil, and Japanese cucumber.



LOCAL GEMS

HONKY-TONKS are a Texan tradition that dates to the 1930s, but not a lot people outside of the state are aware that many of these dance halls are as much about eating great food as they are about kicking up your heels. Our favorite of these country music hubs is the **Broken Spoke**, in Austin (3201 South Lamar Boulevard; 512/442-6189; www.brokenspokeaustintx.com). Willie Nelson and George Strait have been known to bring down the house, and the bill usually features established local musicians. If you ask us, though, the best house act is the world-famous chicken fried steak with peppery cream gravy.

PETER TSAI/ALAMY

SMITTY'S MARKET *208 South Commerce, Lockhart (512/398-9344; www.smittysmarket.com). Inexpensive.* The smoked prime rib and thick pork chops at Smitty's offer a delicious education in the tradition of German-Czech meat markets in Texas. At this time-worn eatery, which used to be the celebrated Kreuz Market, meats are smoked over oak in brick pits and served piled on butcher paper.

SNOW'S BBQ *516 Main Street, Lexington (979/773-4640; www.snowsbbq.com). Inexpensive.* Crowned the best barbecue in the state by *Texas Monthly* in 2008. Pit master Tootsie Tomanetz's brisket, sold on Saturdays only at this 40-seat place 50 miles from Houston, is incomparably good. Get there waaaaaay early.

SPANISH FLOWERS *4701 North Main Street, Houston (713/869-1706; www.spanish-flowers.com). Moderate.* There's no shortage of Tex-Mex options in Houston, but few of them have as loyal a fan base as chef Mary Bernal's unpretentious restaurant. Her chicken with mole sauce can't be beat.

STEPHAN PYLES *1807 Ross Avenue, Dallas (214/580-7000; www.stephanpyles.com). Expensive.* Stephan Pyles helped propel Southwestern cooking onto the national stage 25 years ago; today, his cooking also draws on South American and Mediterranean cuisines, with dishes like cardamom-scented spit-roasted suckling pig and saffron-laced gazpacho.

STINGAREE *1295 Stingaree Road, Crystal Beach (409-684-2731; www.stingaree.com). Moderate.* Ah, this is the life: to sit on the patio of Stingaree, just outside Galveston, soaking up views of the bay and feasting on oysters on the half shell, fried boudin balls, and boiled crabs. Another beer, please.

STRIP HOUSE *1200 McKinney Street, Houston (713/659-6000). Expensive.* You have to be good to stand out as a steak house in Houston, and this place has succeeded in doing just that, with excellent prime steaks and sides like creamed spinach with truffle oil.

T'AFIA *3701 Travis Street, Houston (713/524-6922; www.tafia.com). Expensive.* Only the most devoted farm-to-table chef would hold a farmers' market in her restaurant's parking lot. That's Monica Pope for you; her wildly creative local cuisine translates into dishes like buttery house-made duck prosciutto with fennel and cocktails like the ratafia, a blend of wine and fruit-infused spirits.

TEI AN *1722 Routh Street, Dallas (214/220-2828). Expensive.* Chef Teiichi Sakurai earned high praise for his sushi at Tei Tei, but at his newly opened Japanese noodle house, it's all about the soba. Handmade from buckwheat flour, the noodles form the base in outstanding duck and curry dishes.

UCHI *801 South Lamar Boulevard, Austin (512/916-4808; www.uchiaustin.com). Expensive.* Located in a 1930s bungalow, Tyson Cole's Texas-inflected Japanese restaurant features palate-expanding dishes like Norwegian mackerel with preserved lemons grilled over Japanese oak charcoal.

YORK STREET *6047 Lewis Street, Dallas (214/826-0968; www.yorkstreetdallas.com). Expensive.* Chef Sharon Hage presides over Dallas's most intimate dining experience. In this soigné space that contains just 12 tables, she serves lovingly crafted dishes like buttered celery bisque and lavender-roasted Texas quail.

WHERE TO STAY

THE FAIRMOUNT *401 South Alamo Street, San Antonio (210/224-8800; www.thefairmounthotelsanantonio.com). Rates: $189–$269 double.* With 37 individually decorated rooms, this luxury hotel near the La Villita Historic District is the best place to stay in San Antonio.

FOUR SEASONS HOUSTON *1300 Lamar Street, Houston (713/650-1300; www.fourseasons.com/houston). Rates: $225–$379 double.* Located in the heart of downtown, this suave hotel offers lushly appointed rooms and ample amenities, including spa services.

GAGE HOTEL *101 Highway 90 West, Marathon (432/386-4205; www.gagehotel.com). Rates: $90–$198 double.* This historic hotel in Marathon, in the magnificent Big Bend region of West Texas, features rooms with fireplaces encircling a shared courtyard. Try the top-shelf margarita at the White Buffalo Bar.

HOTEL SAN JOSE *1316 South Congress Avenue, Austin (512/852-2350; www.sanjosehotel.com). Rates: $235–$260 double.* This revamped 1930s motor court in the heart of Austin's bustling South Congress strip drips with retro style.

ROSEWOOD MANSION ON TURTLE CREEK *2821 Turtle Creek Boulevard, Dallas (214/559-2100; www.mansiononturtlecreek.com). Rates: $250–$595 double.* This luxury hotel is in Turtle Creek, one of Dallas's poshest neighborhoods; its restaurant is a proven breeding ground for celebrity chefs from Dean Fearing to Kent Rathbun.

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THE RECIPES

First Courses



CAMPECHANA

(Mexican Seafood Cocktail)

SERVES 6–8

This dish is a favorite at Goode Company Seafood in Houston (see "The Guide", page 77). It goes perfectly with fried tortilla chips and cold beer.

- **1/2 cup fresh lime juice**
- **1/3 cup ketchup**
- **1/4 cup chili sauce, such as Heinz**
- **1/4 cup chopped cilantro leaves**
- **1/4 cup chopped green olives**
- **1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1/4 cup finely chopped white onion**
- **1/4 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley**
- **1/4 cup tomato-clam cocktail, such as Clamato**
- **1/4 cup seeded and chopped fresh tomatoes**

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- **1 tbsp. chopped fresh oregano**
- **2 tsp. Tabasco**
- **2 anaheim chiles, roasted, peeled, seeded, and chopped**
- **1 clove garlic, finely chopped**
- **1 serrano chile, finely chopped**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **1/2 lb. cooked and peeled medium shrimp**
- **1/2 lb. jumbo lump crabmeat, picked and cleaned**
- **1 avocado, cut into 1/4" cubes**

Combine the first 15 ingredients in a large bowl and season with salt; toss to mix. Fold in shrimp, crab, and avocado. Serve with tortilla chips.



The following salsas (pictured, clockwise from left: verde, tomato, mango-habanero) earned high honors at the 2008 Austin Chronicle Hot Sauce Festival (see No. 14).

MANGO-HABANERO SALSA

MAKES ABOUT 5 CUPS

Adding the mangoes after puréeing gives this salsa, winner in the "special variety" category, a chunky texture.

- **3 tbsp. canola oil**
- **3 cloves garlic, unpeeled**
- **3 tomatillos, husked and washed**
- **3 tomatoes, cored**
- **1 red bell pepper**
- **1 yellow bell pepper**
- **1 orange habanero chile**
- **1 poblano chile**
- **1/2 medium white onion**
- **1/2 cup minced red onion**
- **1/4 cup chopped cilantro leaves**
- **1/4 cup fresh lime juice**
- **1 large mango, peeled, pitted, and cut into 1/4" cubes**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**

❶ Heat oven to broil; place a rack 6" from the heating element. Put the first 9 ingredients into a large bowl and toss. Transfer ingredients to a foil-lined baking sheet; broil, turning a few times, until blistered, 10–12 minutes. Transfer all but the peppers and chiles to a bowl; let cool. Continue broiling peppers and chiles until soft, 3–5 minutes. Let steam in a covered bowl for 15 minutes.

❷ Peel garlic and stem, seed, and peel peppers and chiles; transfer all broiled vegetables to a food processor; process until finely chopped. Transfer salsa to a bowl and stir in red onions, cilantro, lime juice, and mangoes; season with salt.

SALSA VERDE

MAKES 2 2/3 CUPS

The recipe for this smooth, spicy salsa—the first-prize winner in the green-sauce category—comes from Marti Cardenas of Austin, Texas.

- **7 jalapeño chiles, stemmed, halved, and seeded**
- **7 serrano chiles, stemmed, halved, and seeded**
- **7 tomatillos, husked, washed, and halved**
- **3 cloves garlic**
- **2 plum tomatoes, cored**
- **1 anaheim chile, stemmed, halved, and seeded**
- **1 poblano chile, stemmed, halved, and seeded**
- **1/2 onion**
- **1/4 cup finely chopped cilantro**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**

Put first 8 ingredients into a 4-qt. saucepan; add 8 cups water. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until chiles are soft, about 20 minutes. Drain chile mixture and transfer to a food processor; purée. Let cool. Stir in cilantro and season with salt. Chill before serving.

TOMATO SALSA

MAKES 4 1/2 CUPS

A version of this fresh salsa took third prize in the red-sauce category.

- **7 cloves garlic**
- **2 serrano chiles, stemmed, halved, and seeded**
- **1 habanero chile, stemmed, halved, and seeded**
- **2 medium beefsteak tomatoes, cored and seeded**
- **1/2 white onion**
- **1 1/2 cups canned, drained, and diced fire-roasted tomatoes**
- **1/3 cup fresh lime juice**
- **1/4 cup chopped cilantro leaves**
- **3 scallions, thinly sliced**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**

In a food processor, chop garlic and chiles. Add beefsteak tomatoes and onion; pulse until chopped. Add fire-roasted tomatoes, lime juice, cilantro, and scallions; pulse until roughly chopped. Season with salt.



OYSTERS GILHOOLEY

MAKES 12 OYSTERS

The cooks at Gilhooley's in San Leon, Texas, grill their oysters (see No. 8) with parmesan; broiling them works, too. See page 102 for step-by-step oyster-shucking instructions.

- **8 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened**
- **1 tbsp. worcestershire**
- **1 tbsp. finely chopped garlic**
- **1 1/2 tsp. Tabasco**
- **12 oysters, shucked, on half shell**
- **12 small shrimp, cooked and peeled**
- **1/3 cup finely grated parmesan**
- **Lemon slices, for serving**

Heat oven to broil; place a rack 3" from heating element. In a food processor, pulse butter, worcestershire, garlic, and Tabasco until smooth. Arrange oysters on a foil-lined baking sheet. Top each oyster with a shrimp and some of the butter mixture; sprinkle with parmesan. Broil until oysters just curl, about 5 minutes. Serve with lemon slices.



TEXAS CAVIAR

SERVES 6

The legenday Texas cook Helen Corbitt (see page 20) invented this simple, delicious black-eyed pea salad in Austin in 1940.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: LANDON NORDEMAN; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; LANDON NORDEMAN; TODD COLEMAN

THE RECIPES

- 2 15-oz. cans black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup roughly chopped cilantro
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 serrano chile, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- ½ red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- ¼ red onion, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Combine first 8 ingredients in a bowl; season with salt and pepper. Refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight. Serve on top of lettuce leaves.

Main Courses



COWBOY RIB EYE

SERVES 4

This recipe for mesquite-grilled steak with onions rings comes from Dallas chef Stephan Pyles (see No. 17).

- ¼ cup plus 1 tsp. sweet paprika
- 3 tbsp. kosher salt
- 1½ tbsp. ground guajillo chile
- 1½ tbsp. ground pasilla chile
- 1½ tbsp. ground chipotle chile
- 1½ tbsp. sugar
- 4 16-oz. bone-in rib-eye steaks
- Canola oil, for frying
- 1 small yellow onion, cut crosswise into ⅛"-thick rings
- 1 cup milk
- 1½ cups flour
- 1 tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper

❶ In a medium bowl, whisk together ¼ cup paprika, 2 tbsp. salt, guajillo, pasilla, and chipotle chiles, and sugar. Put steaks on a parchment-lined baking sheet; rub with the chile mixture. Refrigerate steaks overnight.

❷ Make onion rings: Pour oil into a 4-qt. saucepan to a depth of 2"; heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 350°. Meanwhile, put onions and milk into a bowl; let soak for 20 minutes. In a large bowl, whisk together remaining paprika and salt, flour, chili powder, cayenne, cumin, and pepper. Working in batches, remove onions from the milk, shake off excess, and toss in seasoned flour. Fry onions until crisp, about 3 minutes. Drain on paper towels; season with salt. Set aside.

❸ Build a medium-hot fire with mesquite charcoal or heat a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, heat a medium grill pan over medium-high heat.) Grill steaks, turning once, until medium rare, about 12 minutes. Serve with onion rings.

Pairing Note George Majdalani, the managing partner of the Dallas restaurant Stephan Pyles, recommends the Fall Creek Meritus 2004 ($40), a full-bodied wine made from a blend of Texas-grown merlot, cabernet, and malbec; it's loaded with dark cherry and chocolate flavors and pairs wonderfully with the chile-rubbed steak.



CRAWFISH BOIL

SERVES 2

The crawfish boil (see No. 19) is a Gulf Coast tradition of Cajun origin. For a step-by-step guide to eating crawfish, see page 88.

- 5 lbs. live crawfish (see page 108), rinsed
- 1½ cups kosher salt
- 3 tbsp. paprika
- 2 tbsp. yellow mustard seeds
- 1 tbsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 tbsp. black peppercorns
- 10 bay leaves
- 4 ribs celery, chopped
- 3 heads garlic, halved crosswise
- 2 onions, quartered
- 1 orange, quartered

Fill a large bowl with salted water; soak crawfish for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, add remaining ingredients to a 10-qt. stockpot with 6 quarts of water; bring to a boil. Boil for 30 minutes to infuse broth. Add crawfish; cook until bright red and cooked through, about 8 minutes.



RED CHILE ENCHILADAS

SERVES 6

The González family in Las Cruces, near El Paso (see No. 7), makes enchiladas similar to these using an old family recipe.

- 20 dried new mexico chiles (see page 108)
- 3 tbsp. canola oil, plus more for frying
- 10 cloves garlic
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 1 tbsp. ground cumin
- 2 tsp. sugar
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 12 corn tortillas
- 2 cups grated mozzarella
- 2 cups grated sharp cheddar
- ¾ cup finely chopped red onion
- ¼ cup finely crumbled cotija cheese
- 3 tbsp. crema or sour cream

❶ Soften chiles (see "How to Soak Chiles", page 84). Transfer chiles and 2 cups soaking water to a food processor; let cool.

❷ Heat oven to 450°. Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Add garlic; cook until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer garlic to the food processor with the reserved chiles, reserving oil in skillet. Purée chile-garlic mixture; add lime, cumin, sugar, and salt and pulse to combine. Strain through a sieve; discard solids. Transfer chile sauce to reserved skillet; heat sauce over medium heat.

❸ Pour oil into a 10" skillet over medium-high heat to a depth of ½". Using tongs and working with one tortilla at a time, dip tortilla in oil, cook until slightly crisp, about 15 seconds. Drain tortilla. Dip in chile sauce to coat, and transfer to a plate. Sprinkle some of the mozzarella, cheddar, and onions along center of tortilla. Roll up enchilada. Arrange rolled enchiladas on a baking sheet; bake until cheese is melted, about 5 minutes. Divide enchiladas between 4 plates; sprinkle with cotija cheese and drizzle with crema.

Pairing Note Michael Flynn, the wine director at the Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek, in Dallas, recommends a dry rosé for these enchiladas. The McPherson Cellars grenache-syrah Rosé 2008 ($10) has a crisp acidity and a pronounced fruit flavor that complements the chile sauce's heat.

MASA HARINA

Cooks in Texas often add finely shredded corn tortillas to soups and stews while they cook; as the tortillas dissolve, they add thickness and the subtly nutty taste of ground-corn masa, the dough used for making tortillas. You can achieve a similar effect by using masa harina instead. Available at Latin American markets, masa harina is the powdered form of fresh corn masa. Adding it (instead of standard cornstarch) to dishes like the chili on page 86 at the end of cooking will not only thicken the stew beautifully but also lend a delicious hint of masa flavor. *—Ben Mims*



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; TODD COLEMAN; LANDON NORDEMAN



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THE RECIPES



REDFISH ON THE HALF SHELL

SERVES 4

The "half shell" in this classic Texas dish (see No. 9) is actually the scales-on skin of the fileted fish. Ask your fishmonger to leave the scales on.

- **6 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened**
- **1 tbsp. finely chopped shallots**
- **1 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro**
- **1 tsp. finely chopped thyme**
- **½ tsp. chili powder**
- **½ tsp. paprika**
- **4 10–12-oz. boneless redfish, snapper, or sea bass filets, scales left on (see page 108)**
- **1 tbsp. canola oil**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **12 thin lemon rounds**

Build a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium. Put butter, shallots, cilantro, thyme, chili powder, and paprika into a bowl. Using a hand mixer, whip mixture until fluffy. Brush scales of fish with oil. Flip filets; season flesh with salt and pepper and smear each with 1 tbsp. butter mixture. Top each filet with 3 lemon rounds. Place fish, scale side down, on grill and cover. Cook, basting occasionally with remaining butter mixture, until scales are blackened and fish is cooked through, 12–15 minutes.

Pairing Note Bill Floyd, the owner of the Houston restaurant Reef, recommends a light-bodied cabernet—specifically, Becker Vineyards Iconoclast Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 ($11), from the Texas Hill Country—for this robustly flavored fish. It's bold enough to stand up to the spices but nuanced enough not to overpower the dish.



SALPICÓN

(Shredded Beef with Lime and Avocado)

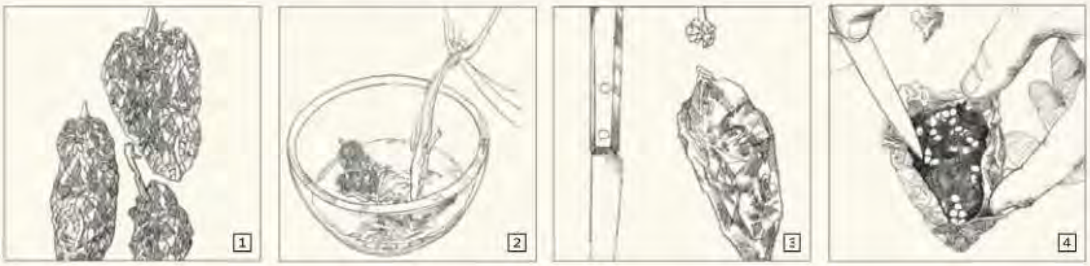
SERVES 12

This tender shredded-brisket salad is based on one made by David Jurado, the owner of the El Paso restaurant Casa Jurado (see No. 7). The dish is emblematic of the spare but flavorful cooking favored in El Paso and the neighboring Mexican city of Juárez.

- **2 lbs. flat-cut beef brisket, trimmed**
- **2 cloves garlic, smashed**
- **2 bay leaves**
- **1 large onion, sliced**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **¼ lb. jack cheese, cubed**
- **¼ cup fresh lime juice**
- **¼ cup finely chopped cilantro**
- **1 tbsp. chopped canned chipotle chiles en adobo**
- **4 scallions, chopped**
- **3 medium tomatoes, cored, seeded, and finely chopped**
- **Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **Warmed corn tortillas**
- **Sweet paprika, to taste**
- **1 avocado, pitted and sliced**

Bring the beef, garlic, bay leaves, onions, salt, and 6 cups water to a boil in a 6-qt. dutch oven. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer until the brisket is tender, about 3 hours. Remove pot from heat and let brisket cool, uncovered. Transfer brisket to a cutting board; shred with your fingers. Roughly chop meat; transfer to a bowl. Mix in the cheese, lime juice, cilantro, chipotles, scallions, and tomatoes. Season with salt and pepper. Serve the salpicón wrapped in tortillas and topped with paprika and avocado slices.

HOW TO SOAK CHILES



Dried chiles have countless uses in the kitchen. When ground up, they become potent and versatile spices, and when soaked and softened, they make a delicious base for sauces like the one accompanying the enchiladas on page 82. Soaking chiles is quick and easy. Put the chiles—anchos are pictured [1]—into a bowl and cover with boiling water [2]. Let them soak, nudging them occasionally with a spoon to make sure they're fully submerged, until chiles are soft and dark red, about 20 minutes. Remove them from the water and pull off the stems (some recipes may call for reserving some of the soaking water) [3]. Finally, slice them open lengthwise and scrape out the seeds [4]. The chiles are now ready to purée for sauce.



SARTIN'S "BARBECUED" CRABS

SERVES 2

The cooks at Sartin's Seafood (see "The Guide", page 78), a popular restaurant in Nederland, in southeast Texas, dust their crabs with their famed Cajun-style seasoning and deep-fry them.

- **12 live medium blue crabs**
- **2 cups Cajun seasoning, preferably Sartin's (see page 108)**
- **Canola oil, for frying**

❶ Place crabs in a bowl of ice water for 10 minutes. Working with one crab at a time, grasp back legs and pry off and discard top shell. Flip crab; pull off the hard flap called the apron. Rinse crabs in a colander. Pull out gills; rinse away organs. Using kitchen shears, cut off the "mouth" parts. Dry crab with paper towels; transfer to a large bowl. Toss crabs with seasoning; let sit for 15 minutes to absorb seasoning.

❷ Meanwhile, pour oil to a depth of 2" into a 6-qt. heavy-bottomed pot; heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 400°. Working in 2 batches, fry crabs until deep red, about 5 minutes. Drain on paper towels.



TAMALE TART

SERVES 8–10

This savory dish is the invention of

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LANDON NORDEMAN (2); ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; ILLUSTRATIONS: BRENDA WEAVER

The SAVEUR Chef Series

MICHAEL WHITE grew up eating bratwurst in Beloit, Wisconsin, but the native Midwesterner has captivated New York's most jaded gnocchi know-it-alls with his refined interpretations of classic Italian dishes. As the chef of Alto, Convivio, and the new seafood-focused Marea, White always stays true to the timeless tenets of The Beautiful Country's cuisine—obsessive seasonality, making almost everything by hand—while also tweaking tradition to make every plate he serves very much his own.



MELISSA HOM

How did you fall for Italian food?

My first kitchen job out of culinary school was at Spiaggia in Chicago. I remember seeing chefs whipping rice with butter and cheese and thinking, "Wow, is this really Italian food?" Remember, this was 19 years ago—they were just making risotto! After two years there I had officially caught the Italian bug, and went to Italy. I realize now that to learn to cook Italian food, you really have to be there. Even when you're working at a small trattoria, the food is so good because they do so little to great ingredients. I took that with me: Now I look to see what I can take out of a dish, not what I can add to it.

What else did living in Italy teach you?

It taught me how varied the cuisine can be. In Sicily, you might be eating Arab-influenced food like couscous cooked with cinnamon and star anise. In the North, you might be eating German-influenced food like spaetzle and sauerkraut and big hunks of smoked bacon. Because I'm a stickler, we stay faithful to this regionality. For instance, at Alto, we make pasta with egg and 00 flour, like they do in the north of Italy. At Convivio, we make pasta with durum wheat, semolina, or a combination of the two. No eggs, just water, like they do in the South.

How does this regionality play out during the summer?

Well, let's take something like fish. In the summer, fish is everywhere in Italy. In Sicily, you'll see simple grilled fish served with salmoriglio, a vinaigrette-like mixture of oregano, lemon juice, and olive oil, while in the North of Italy you'll see boiled spiny lobster with *salsa rosa*, a pink sauce made with olive oil, mayonnaise, brandy, lemon juice, and maybe a little tomato paste.

Are there any ingredients you're really excited about right now?

I love *colatura di alici*. It's basically garum, or fish sauce, made from the clarified dripping of salted anchovies from Cetera, on the Amalfi Coast. It's got a real pungency to it, and I like to add a few drops to a simple dish like pasta with olive oil, garlic, and peperoncini.

SARDINE AL CARBONE

(Grilled Sardines with Salmoriglio)

SERVES 4

- **8 large sardines, cleaned and heads removed**
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- **4 very ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and diced into ½-inch cubes**
- **2 oz. capers, rinsed and drained**
- **Juice from 1 lemon**
- **1 clove garlic, minced**
- **2 tsp. dry oregano**
- **4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1 lb. small waxy potatoes, boiled and quartered**
- **8 oz. wild arugula**

Preheat a grill or shallow skillet to high heat. Drizzle the sardines with 1 tbsp. of the oil and season both sides with salt and pepper. Grill the fish, about 2 minutes per side, remove from heat, and transfer to a serving dish. Top the fish with tomatoes, capers, lemon juice, and oregano. Heat a frying pan over medium heat. Add the remaining oil, potatoes, and garlic, and stir to combine. Cook for 5 minutes, or until golden brown. Then add arugula and cook just until it wilts, about 30 seconds. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Surround the sardines with the potatoes and arugula and serve family-style.



THE RECIPES

Dallas chef Stephan Pyles (see No. 17). You can find step-by-step instructions for steaming this tart on page 104.

FOR THE CUSTARD:

- 2 **heads garlic, halved crosswise**
- 2 **tbsp. olive oil**
- 3 **cups heavy cream**
- 4 **egg yolks**
- 2 **tsp. kosher salt**
- ¼ **tsp. freshly ground white pepper**

FOR THE TART SHELL:

- 1 **large red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and chopped**
- 3 **ancho chiles**
- 2 **cups masa harina**
- ¼ **cup yellow cornmeal**
- 2 **tsp. ground cumin**
- 2 **tsp. kosher salt**
- ¼ **tsp. cayenne pepper**
- 6 **tbsp. vegetable shortening**

FOR THE CRAB TOPPING:

- 2 **tbsp. olive oil**
- ½ **small yellow onion, finely chopped**
- ¼ **red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely chopped**
- ¼ **yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely chopped**
- ¼ **poblano chile, halved, seeded, and finely chopped**
- 10 **oz. fresh lump crabmeat, picked and cleaned**
- 2 **tsp. fresh lime juice**
- 2 **tbsp. chopped cilantro**

❶ Make the custard: Heat oven to 350°. Place garlic in foil, drizzle with oil, and wrap tight; bake until soft, 35–40 minutes. Squeeze roasted garlic into a bowl. In a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat, simmer cream, stirring, until reduced to about 1 cup, 25–30 minutes. Vigorously whisk reserved garlic into cream; let cool slightly. In a bowl, whisk egg yolks. Whisk in cream mixture, salt, and pepper. Cover custard with plastic wrap; let cool.

❷ Make the tart shell: Bring a 2-qt. saucepan of water to a boil. Add bell peppers; cook until soft, about 10 minutes. Drain peppers; transfer to a food processor; purée until smooth. Reserve ¾ cup pepper purée. Meanwhile, soften ancho chiles according to steps on page 84. Transfer chiles to a food processor with ½ cup soaking water. Purée until smooth; strain through a sieve. Reserve 6 tbsp. chile purée.

❸ In a medium bowl, combine masa harina, cornmeal, cumin, salt, and cayenne; set aside. In a large bowl, beat shortening, using a handheld mixer, until fluffy. Sprinkle in dry ingredients and mix until pea-size crumbs form. Add reserved pepper and chile purées and mix (dough will be very sticky). Form dough into a flat disk; transfer to a 9" tart pan with a removable bottom. Press dough evenly over bottom and up sides of pan to a ¼" thickness. Pour in custard; cover with plastic wrap.

❹ Place a bamboo steamer inside a wide-bottomed pot; pour in 1" water. Bring to a boil, reduce to medium-low, and transfer tart to steamer. Cover and steam until custard is just set, about 25 minutes. Using kitchen towels, lift out tart. Remove plastic wrap and tart ring and transfer tart to a platter.

❺ Make crab topping: Heat oil in a 12" skillet over high heat. Add onions; cook until soft, 4–5 minutes. Add peppers, chiles, crab, and lime; cook until just hot. Stir in cilantro and season with salt. Spoon crab mixture over tart.



WOODY DESILVA'S CHAMPIONSHIP CHILI

SERVES 6

Texas chili (see No. 3) doesn't get any better than this fiery-hot version.

- 4 **lbs. beef chuck, trimmed and cut into ½" cubes**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste**
- 4 **tbsp. canola oil**
- 5 **medium onions, chopped**
- 5 **cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- 2 **6-oz. cans tomato paste**
- 4 **tbsp. dried oregano**
- 3 **tbsp. chili powder**
- 4 **tsp. ground chile pequín (see page 102) or cayenne pepper**
- 1 **tbsp. sweet paprika**
- 1 **tbsp. Tabasco**
- 1 **tsp. ground cumin**
- 4 **tbsp. masa harina**

Season beef with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a 6-qt. pot over high heat. Working in 4 batches, brown beef, about 3 minutes per batch. Using a slotted spoon, transfer beef to a plate. Add onions and garlic; cook until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Return beef to pot; stir in tomato paste. Cook, stirring frequently and scraping bottom of pot with a wooden spoon, until tomato paste is caramelized, about 12 minutes. Add oregano, chili powder, chile pequín, paprika, Tabasco, and cumin; cook, stirring frequently, for 1 minute. Add 5 cups water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, stirring occasionally, until meat is tender, about 2 hours. Stir in masa harina; season with salt. Simmer, stirring, until thickened, about 5 minutes.

Sides



CABBAGE AND RADISH SLAW

SERVES 4

The recipe for this simple, fresh side dish comes from the González family (see No. 7).

- ½ **head green cabbage, halved, cored, and thinly sliced**
- 4 **radishes, thinly sliced**
- 3 **tbsp. cider vinegar**
- 3 **tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

Combine cabbage and radishes in a bowl; toss with vinegar and oil. Season with salt and pepper; set aside to let vegetables wilt slightly, about 10 minutes.



JALAPEÑO CORN BREAD

SERVES 10

Skillet-cooked corn bread is a popular vaquero (Mexican cowboy) side dish (see No. 21).

- 2 **cups yellow cornmeal**
- 2 **cups flour**
- 1½ **tbsp. sugar**
- 1 **tbsp. plus 1 tsp. baking powder**
- 2½ **tsp. salt**
- 2 **cups milk**
- ½ **cup corn oil**

FLOR DE JAMAICA

Agua de jamaica, a refreshing drink popular on both sides of the Texas-Mexico border (see recipe on page 90), gets its deep red color and tangy, floral flavor from the flower of a common garden plant: hibiscus. Called jamaica (pronounced ha-MY-kuh) in Spanish, the shrubby plant thrives in subtropical climates. Its flowers are often dried and boiled in sugar water to make a syrup that's used in drinks, jams, and even Red Zinger tea. Dried hibiscus flowers are usually sold as "flor de jamaica" in Latin American markets and in health food stores. (See THE PANTRY, page 108, for a source.) *—Aarti Virani*



ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (4)

THE RECIPES

- **2 eggs, beaten**
- **3/4 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels**
- **3/4 cup sliced pickled jalapeños**
- **2 tbsp. butter**

Heat oven to 425°. Whisk together cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. Whisk in milk, corn oil, and eggs. Using a rubber spatula, fold in corn and jalapeños; set batter aside. Heat a 12" cast-iron skillet; grease with butter. Pour in batter; bake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean, about 35 minutes.



FRIJOLES A LA CHARRA

(Slow-Simmered Pinto Beans)

SERVES 8

The recipe for these spicy beans (see No. 21) is based on one given to us by Melissa Guerra, the South Texas chef and cookbook author.

- **1 lb. dried pinto beans**
- **1/4 lb. bacon, roughly chopped**
- **10 sprigs cilantro, chopped**
- **2 garlic cloves, smashed**
- **2 serrano chiles**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **1 large tomato, chopped**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**

Combine all the ingredients and 7 cups water in a 6-qt. dutch oven. Boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, partially covered, stirring occasionally, until beans are tender, about 3 hours. Season with salt.



SAUTÉED CHINESE BROCCOLI

SERVES 4

At the Houston restaurant Reef, Chinese broccoli, brightened with ginger and chiles (see No. 21), is served alongside redfish on the half shell.

- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **1 lb. Chinese broccoli (see page 108) or broccoli rabe**
- **3 tbsp. grapeseed oil**
- **1 tbsp. finely chopped ginger**
- **2 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- **2 fresno chiles, halved, seeded, and finely chopped**
- **2 tbsp. lime juice**
- **1 tbsp. soy sauce**
- **1 tbsp. rice wine vinegar**

❶ Bring a 6-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Roughly chop Chinese broccoli leaves and slice stems on the diagonal to a 1/2" thickness. Transfer stems to pot; cook until crisp-tender, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the stems to a bowl. Cook leaves until just tender, about 1 minute. Combine leaves and stems; set aside.

❷ Heat oil in a 10" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the ginger, garlic, and chiles; cook until soft, about 2 minutes. Add reserved Chinese broccoli; cook until hot, about 2 minutes. Stir in lime juice, soy sauce, and vinegar and season with salt.



GERMAN POTATO SALAD

SERVES 4–6

A hearty potato salad like this one (see No. 21) makes an ideal accompaniment for barbecued brisket. The dish is a legacy of German immigrants in Central Texas.

- **2 1/4 lb. waxy potatoes, such as red new potatoes**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **3 strips bacon, chopped**
- **1/2 yellow onion, chopped**
- **1 tbsp. all-purpose flour**
- **3/4 cup chicken broth**
- **1/3 cup white wine**
- **2 tbsp. dijon mustard**
- **1 1/2 tsp. sugar**
- **2 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves, plus more for garnish**
- **Ground black pepper, to taste**

❶ Put potatoes into a 4-qt. saucepan; cover with salted water by 1". Bring to a boil and reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until potatoes are tender, 20–25 minutes. Drain; transfer to a bowl. Cover with plastic wrap to keep warm.

❷ Meanwhile, cook bacon in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat until crisp, about 7 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a paper towel; set aside. Reduce heat to medium and add onions; cook, stirring, until soft, about 8 minutes. Add flour; cook, stirring constantly, for 45 seconds. Add broth, wine, mustard, and sugar. Bring to a boil, whisking constantly; set aside.

❸ Peel potatoes and cut into thick slices; transfer to a bowl. Pour in broth mixture, add parsley, and season with salt and pepper. Toss to coat. Garnish with reserved bacon and parsley.



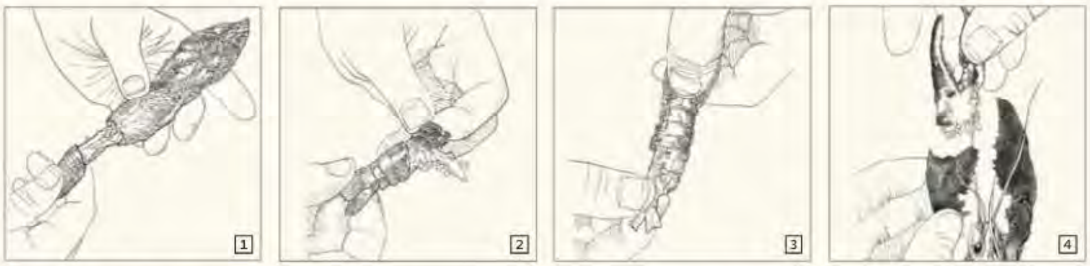
WINE-SIMMERED COLLARD GREENS

SERVES 6

Houston chef Bryan Caswell simmers collard greens in chicken broth and gewürztraminer (see No. 21), a slightly sweet white wine, to deepen their flavor.

- **4 tbsp. canola oil**
- **1/4 lb. slab bacon, cubed**

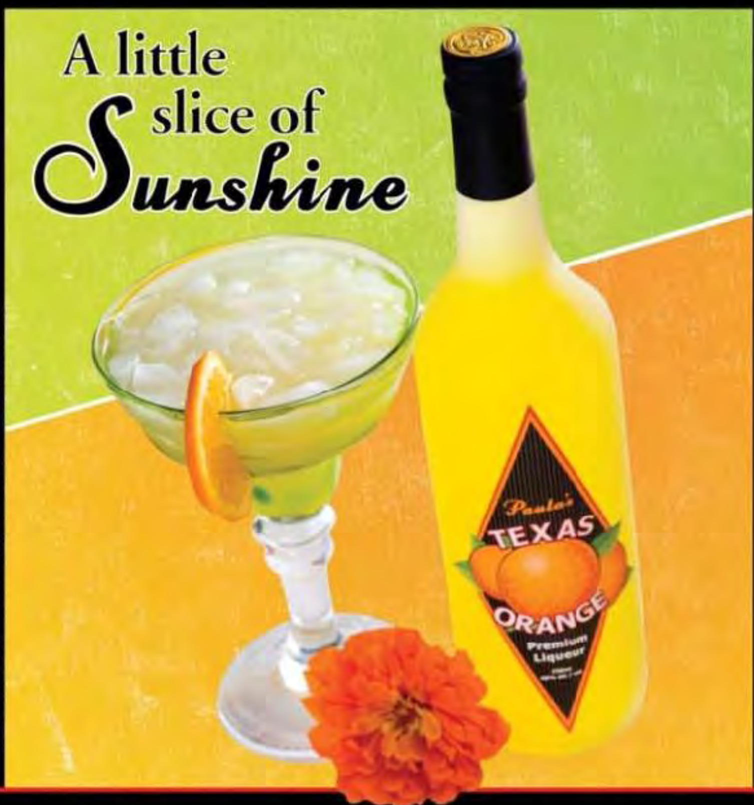
HOW TO EAT CRAWFISH



To eat the crawfish in the boil on page 82, grip the crawfish by the head and tail with the fingertips of both hands; using a twisting motion, separate the head from the tail [1]. (Suck the juice from the head before discarding it, if you like.) Peel away the first outer band of shell from the tail section [2]. Press your thumb to the base of the tail and use the fingers of your other hand to gently pull the meat free [3]. Crack the large claws to extract their meat [4].

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; JAMES OSELAND; TODD COLEMAN (2); ILLUSTRATIONS: BRENDA WEAVER


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- 6 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1 yellow onion, quartered
- 1½ lbs. collard greens (about 40 leaves), stemmed and roughly chopped
- 2 cups white wine, such as gewürztraminer
- 4 cups chicken broth
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp. sugar

Heat 2 tbsp. oil in an 8-qt. stockpot over medium-high heat. Add bacon; cook, stirring occasionally, until bacon is browned and crisp, about 12 minutes. Transfer bacon to a bowl with a slotted spoon. Add garlic and onions to pot; cook until onions are golden, 8–10 minutes. Using the slotted spoon, transfer the garlic and onions to the bowl with the bacon. Add the remaining oil and greens to pot; cook until greens are slightly wilted, about 5 minutes. Add the wine and bring to a boil; cook until liquid is reduced by half, about 10 minutes. Add broth, 4 cups water, and reserved bacon, onions, and garlic; season lightly with salt and pepper. Boil; reduce heat to medium low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the collards are tender, about 2 hours. Stir in vinegar and sugar and season with salt and pepper.

Drinks



AGUA DE JAMAICA

SERVES 6

The recipe for this sweet drink comes from the Enriquez family in El Paso (see No. 7).

- 5 tbsp. sugar
- 2 cups dried jamaica flowers (see page 86)

Bring sugar and 6 cups water to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan. Remove pan from heat; add jamaica flowers. Let steep for 5 hours. Strain liquid; transfer to a pitcher. Chill and serve over ice.

BOOK CLUB SANGRIA

SERVES 6-8

This sweet-tart wine punch (see No. 18) was invented by members of the Junior League of Houston book club in the 1970s.

- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 750-ml bottle fruity red wine, such as pinot noir
- ¼ cup brandy
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 1 cup ginger ale
- 1 cup fresh pineapple chunks
- 4 thin slices each of orange, lemon, and lime
- 1 fresh peach, pitted and sliced

Bring sugar and 1 cup water to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan. Let cool and transfer to a pitcher; add wine, brandy, and citrus juices. Chill. Before serving, add ginger ale, pineapple, citrus slices, and peaches. Stir and serve over ice.

CHICO

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

This drink (see No. 18) takes its ruby color from blackberry liqueur.

- 2 oz. gin or silver tequila
- 2 oz. blackberry liqueur
- 1 oz. simple syrup
- ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
- Club soda, to taste

Fill a highball glass with ice. Add the gin, liqueur, simple syrup, and lemon juice; top off with club soda. Stir.

CUCUMBER COOLER

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

The bartenders at the Gage Hotel in Marathon, Texas, make this summertime thirst quencher (see No. 18).

- 1 2" piece cucumber, thinly sliced crosswise, plus 1 additional slice for garnish
- ⅛ tsp. fresh thyme leaves
- 1½ oz. vodka, preferably Tito's
- ½ oz. simple syrup

In a cocktail shaker, combine the cucumber slices, thyme, and ¼ cup crushed ice. Using a muddler, crush ingredients until slushy. Add more ice, vodka, and simple syrup. Cover, shake vigorously to combine, and pour contents into a glass garnished with a slice of cucumber.

KENTUCKY CLUB MARGARITA

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

This elegant shaken margarita (see No. 18) is more tart than sweet.

- 1 lime wedge
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1½ oz. silver tequila
- ¾ oz. freshly squeezed lime juice
- ½ oz. Cointreau

Rub a lime wedge around the rim of a chilled margarita glass; dip the rim in salt to coat. In a cocktail shaker, combine tequila, lime juice, Cointreau, and 1 cup crushed ice. Cover and shake vigorously to chill; strain into the glass.

LONGHORN BULL SHOT

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

This drink (see No. 18) is a distinctly Texan riff on the classic beef-broth cocktail known as a bull shot.

- 6 oz. beef broth
- 1½ oz. vodka
- 1 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- Worcestershire, to taste
- Tabasco, to taste

Combine ingredients with a few ice cubes in a tumbler; stir to combine.

MICHELADA

MAKES 1 DRINK

This is the classic Tex-Mex beer cooler (see No. 18).

- 1 lime wedge
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 oz. fresh lime juice
- ½ tsp. worcestershire
- ⅛ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 5 dashes Tabasco
- 1 12-oz. bottle or can of Mexican beer, such as Tecate

Rub a lime wedge around the rim of a pint glass; dip rim in salt. Add lime juice, worcestershire, pepper, and Tabasco; fill glass with ice and beer.

Desserts



BLUEBERRY-CHERRY COBBLER

SERVES 6

Fluffy biscuits top this quick cobbler (see No. 16), which is flavored with cinnamon and almond extract.

CILANTRO

With its pungent aroma, the herb known as cilantro is essential to many Texas cooking traditions. Salsas (like the ones shown on page 81) wouldn't be salsas without the bright flavor of the finely chopped leaves, which, in the case of the cooked salsas, must be added after the main ingredients cool, since heat breaks down the flavor of the delicate leaves. But that doesn't mean you can't use cilantro in soups, stews, and the like, as the recipe for slow-simmered pinto beans on page 88 proves. For long-cooked dishes, you just have to use the whole sprigs, including the stems, whose flavor mellows but doesn't recede during cooking. —*Todd Coleman*



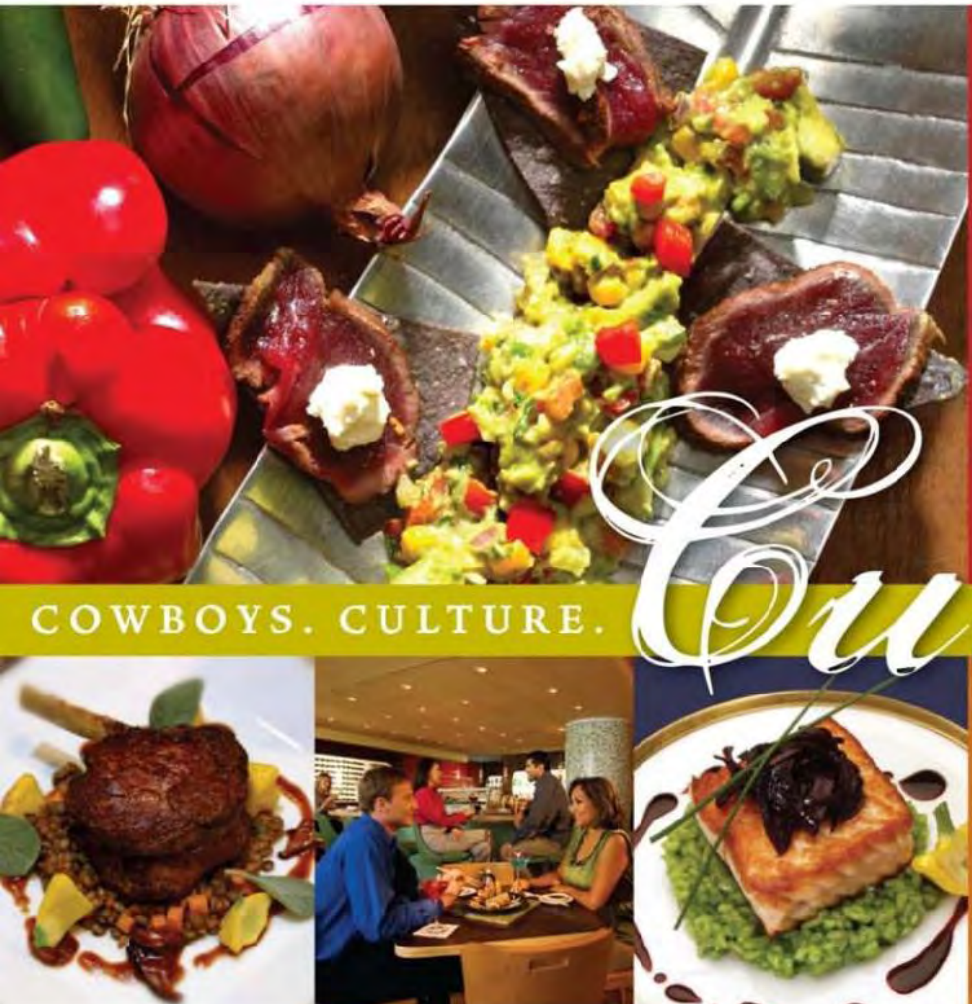
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; TODD COLEMAN



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FORT WORTH

CITY OF COWBOYS AND CULTURE

THE RECIPES

- 4 tbsp. vegetable shortening
- ¾ cup plus 1 tbsp. sugar
- 2 tbsp. cornstarch
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 cups fresh blueberries
- 2 cups frozen sour cherries
- ½ tsp. lemon juice
- ⅛ tsp. almond extract
- 1 cup flour
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ½ cup milk

❶ Heat oven to 400°. Grease an 8" x 8" baking dish with 1 tbsp. shortening; set aside. Whisk ¾ cup sugar, cornstarch, and cinnamon in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add blueberries and cherries; cook until thickened, 7–8 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in lemon juice and almond extract. Pour filling into baking dish; set aside.

❷ In a medium bowl, whisk remaining sugar, flour, baking powder, and salt. With fingers, work remaining shortening into flour until pea-size lumps form. Stir in milk to form a dough. Place heaping tablespoonfuls of dough evenly over filling. Bake until golden and bubbling, 35–40 minutes.



COWBOY COOKIES

MAKES 24 COOKIES

These treats (see No. 16) are from a beloved recipe of the former first lady Laura Bush.

- ¾ cup flour
- ¾ tsp. baking powder
- ¾ tsp. baking soda
- ¾ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 6 tbsp. sugar
- 6 tbsp. light brown sugar
- 1 egg
- ¾ tsp. vanilla extract
- ¾ cup rolled oats
- ¾ cup semisweet chocolate chips
- ½ cup chopped pecans
- ½ cup sweetened flaked coconut

Heat oven to 350°. In a bowl, whisk first 5 ingredients; set aside. In a large bowl, beat butter with a handheld mixer until smooth. Add sugars; beat until fluffy. Add egg and vanilla; beat until smooth. Add flour mixture; beat to form a dough. Stir in oats, chocolate, pecans, and coconut. Form dough into 24 balls; divide between 2 parchment-lined baking sheets. Bake until cooked through, 16–18 minutes. Let cool.



GRAPEFRUIT CAKE

SERVES 12

This citrus-spiked sheet cake is a Texas potluck favorite (see No. 16).

- 3 pink grapefruits
- ⅔ cup unsalted butter, softened, plus more
- 3 cups cake flour, plus more
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1¾ cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- ¾ cup milk
- 1½ tbsp. vanilla extract
- 1 lb. cream cheese, softened
- 2½ cups confectioners' sugar

❶ Zest 1 grapefruit to make 2 tsp. zest; set aside. Peel and segment grapefruits; set aside. Squeeze juice from remaining pulp, reserving ½ cup plus 1 tbsp.; set aside.

❷ Heat oven to 350°. Butter and flour a 9" x 13" baking dish; set aside. In a bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt; set aside. Into a large bowl, beat remaining butter and sugar with a handheld mixer until fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time. Add ½ cup of the reserved juice, milk, and vanilla; stir. Add flour mixture; stir until combined. Line bottom of pan with half the reserved grapefruit; add batter; smooth top with a spatula. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the cake comes out clean, 40–45 minutes; let cool.

❸ In a large bowl, beat reserved zest, remaining juice, and cream cheese until fluffy. Add confectioners' sugar ½ cup at a time; beat until smooth. Spread frosting over cake; top with the remaining grapefruit segments. Chill.



PECAN PIE

SERVES 8

For this pecan pie (see No. 16), using fresh nuts makes a difference.

- 1¼ cups flour
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ⅓ cup vegetable shortening, chilled
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- ⅔ cup sugar
- ⅓ cup unsalted butter, melted
- 3 eggs, beaten

❶ Heat oven to 350°. In a bowl, stir together flour and salt. Add shortening; rub shortening into flour to form pea-size lumps. Add ¼ cup cold water; mix. Gather dough into a ball; transfer to a floured surface; flatten into a disk. Using a rolling pin, roll out dough into a 12" circle; transfer to a 9" pie dish. Trim edges and crimp dough; set aside.

❷ In a bowl, stir together pecans, corn syrup, sugar, butter, and eggs. Pour mixture into pie shell; bake until deep golden brown, about 1 hour. Let cool.



STRAWBERRY KOLACHES

MAKES 16 PASTRIES

These fruit-filled pastries (above, center; see No. 16) are popular in Central Texas. For other kolache fillings, go to SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE121.

- 8 oz. strawberries, hulled and thinly sliced
- 19 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 ¼-oz. package active dry yeast
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened, plus 2 tbsp. melted
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 egg yolk
- 3½ cups flour
- ¾ cup milk

❶ Combine berries, 12 tbsp. sugar, lemon juice, and ¼ cup water in a 2-qt. pan over medium-high heat. Cook until thick, 8–10 minutes. Remove from heat; mash berries until chunky; let cool. In a bowl, stir the yeast, 1 tsp. sugar, and ½ cup water heated to 115°; let sit until foamy. In a large bowl, beat softened butter and 3 tbsp. sugar until combined. Add salt and egg yolk; beat until smooth. Add yeast mixture, 3¼ cups flour, and milk; form a dough. Knead dough in bowl to form a ball. Cover bowl with a towel; set aside in a warm place to let rise, about 1 hour. To make crumb topping, combine remaining sugar, 1 tbsp. melted butter, and remaining flour in a bowl; set aside.

❷ Heat oven to 375°. Divide dough into 16 balls; arrange on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Brush with remaining melted butter; cover with plastic wrap; let rise for 30 minutes. Using back of a spoon, make an indentation in each ball. Spoon 1 tbsp. filling into each; sprinkle with crumb topping. Bake until golden, 30–35 minutes.

ANDRÉ BARANOVSKI (4)

HISTORICAL
FACTS

SECRETS *of*
MIXOLOGISTS

COCKTAIL
RECIPES

TALES *of the* COCKTAIL

For five days every July, the Tales of the Cocktail event in New Orleans brings together the best and brightest of the cocktail community—award-winning mixologists, authors, bartenders, and chefs—for a celebration of the artistry of drink making. If you can't join us for the festivities, you can still be part of the event. Turn the page to learn about our featured spirits, with make-at-home recipes created by top mixologists and behind-the-bottle histories of some of the finest brands on the market.



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tales of the COCKTAIL
NEW ORLEANS
2009

Generations of TRADITION

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MEET *Bobby G*

Finding mixologists who appreciate the quality and taste profile of Tres Generaciones® Tequila is relatively simple, but finding those with the skill set necessary to complement the personalities of these super premium tequilas is much more challenging. World-renowned master mixologist Bobby Gleason has made a career out of combining quality spirits and ingredients in innovative and surprising ways. His original drinks have won critical acclaim from organizations such as the New York International Bar Show and the United States Bartenders Guild and he was named by Angostura as U.S. Mixologist of the Year in 2005 and 2006. Bobby holds the Guinness World record for most cocktails made in 60 minutes.





After harvesting, the spines of the blue agave plant are removed, leaving the hearts, or piñas.

DID YOU KNOW

To celebrate 100 years since the founding of the La Perseverancia distillery, Don Francisco Javier Sauza created 100 bottles of a specially aged tequila that he presented to family and friends in a limited-edition green ceramic bottle. He called his creation Tres Generaciones, in honor of the three generations that had produced Sauza Tequila: Don Cenobio, Don Eladio, and Don Francisco Javier Sauza.



TRES PLATA SPICY PEPINO

MAKES 1

Recipe courtesy of Bobby G

- 1½ oz. Tres Generaciones® Plata
- 2 oz. fresh sour mix
- 3 ½" slices of peeled cucumber
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves (15–20 leaves)
- 1 ⅓" slice of fresh jalapeño pepper or 2–3 dashes of green jalapeño pepper sauce

In a mixing glass, muddle the pepper first, then add cucumber and cilantro and muddle again. Now add remaining ingredients and shake vigorously with ice. Double-strain using a fine mesh strainer into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a lime wheel on the rim and a floating cilantro leaf.



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MEET *Tito*



Connoisseur is a fancy title to slap on a native Texan. But when it comes to making pure, delicious, award-winning vodka, it's the title founder and master distiller Tito Beveridge has earned in spades. A trained geologist and geophysicist, Tito became known locally as the "vodka guy" owing less to his interesting last name than his passion for flavoring vodkas with local Texas habaneros. After trying in vain to get these vodkas into stores, he chose to focus on the vodka itself and was soon hard at work on his micro-distillery in Austin. With American pluck, ingenuity, and determination, he was soon creating a handcrafted vodka he was proud to have bear his name.

As Tito says, "I just kept messing with it until I got to where everybody liked my vodka better than the other stuff you could buy at the time."

DID YOU KNOW

Tito's Handmade Vodka is distilled six times from corn, making it naturally gluten-free. It was recently awarded a rare Double Gold Medal—reserved for unanimous decisions—prevailing over 70 of the world's best premium vodkas at the World Spirits Competition in San Francisco.

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TITO'S MOJITO

MAKES 1

Recipe by The Four Seasons, Austin, TX

- 2 oz. Tito's Handmade Vodka
- 3/4 oz. fresh-squeezed lime juice
- 3/4 oz. ginger-infused syrup*
- 5 blackberries
- 1 sprig mint (about 6 leaves)
- 1 sprig basil (about 4 leaves)
- 2–4 oz. club soda

**Recipe follows, though commercial ginger syrups are available.*

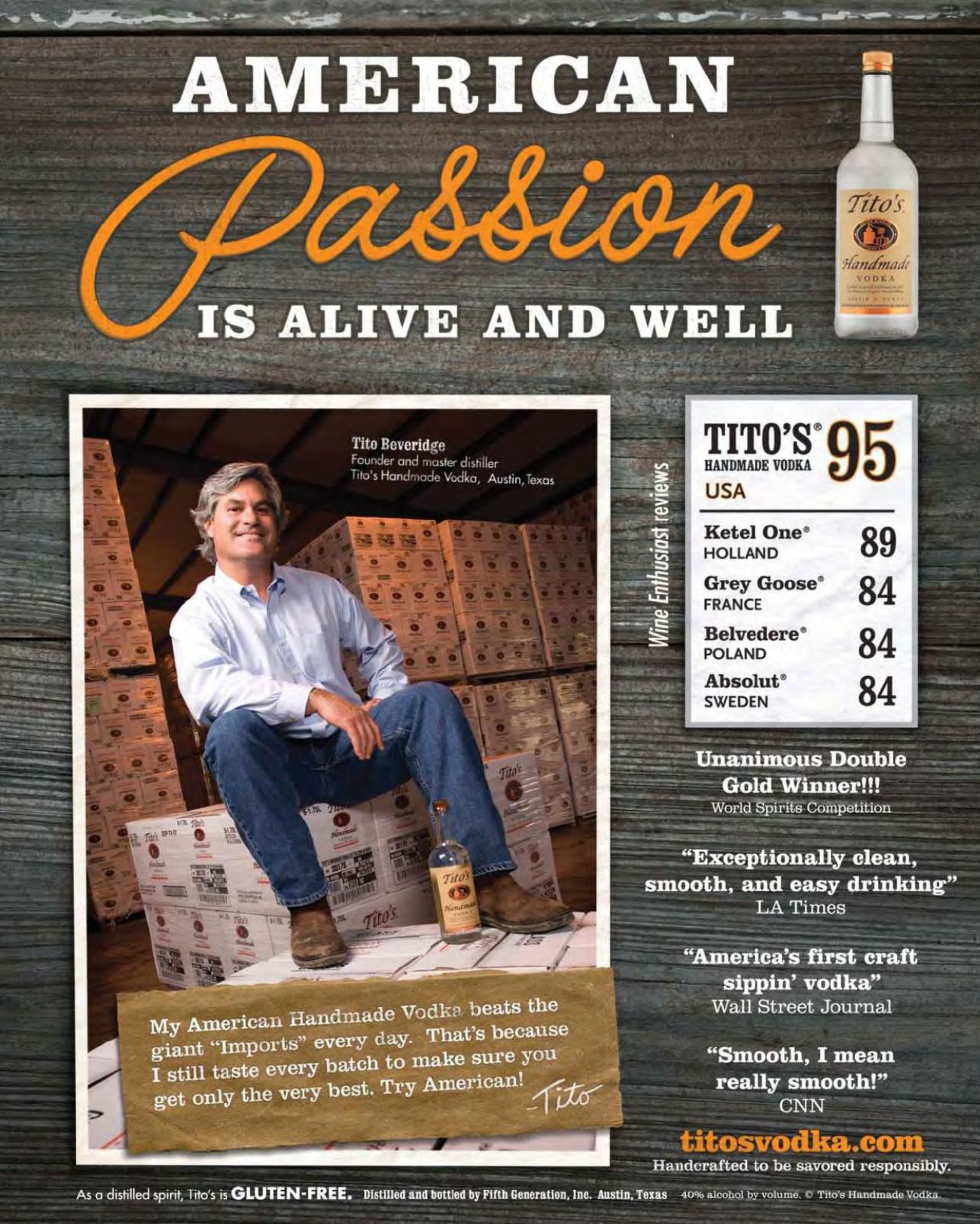
In the bottom of a tall glass, muddle blackberries, mint, basil, and ginger syrup. Add Tito's and fill glass with ice. Top with club soda and stir. Garnish with sprig of mint or basil and a lime wedge.

GINGER SYRUP:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 2" piece fresh ginger, peeled and quartered lengthwise, approximately

In a saucepan, bring water and sugar to a simmer, stirring to completely dissolve sugar. Once sugar is dissolved, add ginger to pan and simmer 1 minute. Allow to cool, leaving ginger to infuse for up to 30 minutes, depending on the potency of the ginger. Taste periodically to make sure ginger is infusing nicely but not overwhelming the syrup. Strain ginger from syrup and store syrup in a squeeze bottle.

☞ For more information on the story behind Tito's Handmade Vodka and where to find a retailer near you, visit **TITOSVODKA.COM**


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As a distilled spirit, Tito's is GLUTEN-FREE. Distilled and bottled by Fifth Generation, Inc. Austin, Texas 40% alcohol by volume. © Tito's Handmade Vodka.

PRIDE
of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico's experience of producing the world's finest rum goes back more than 450 years, to the arrival of sugarcane held by Spanish explorers and conquistadors. In the early 1800s, a Spanish wine merchant named Facundo Bacardi emigrated to the region and set out to tame rum's wild and exotic reputation. After experimenting with several filtration methods, he incorporated active charcoal to create a new clear, or "white rum," that was then aged in oak barrels to mellow and enhance its flavor. This lighter style of rum continues to be among the most popular on the island today.

FACT: As a matter of law, all Puerto Rican rum must be aged for at least 1 year. Different filtering and blending methods give each rum its distinctive color, flavor, and character—from silver white, to warm gold, to luscious, dark brown. It's this wonderful versatility and variety that has allowed rum from Puerto Rico to become the finest.

MEET *Ahmed*

Ahmed Naveira Navarro has been one of the leading mixologists for the Rums of Puerto Rico since 1999. A famed bartender, show tender, and now formally acknowledged as a rum ambassador, Ahmed is among the most informed and engaging voices on the quality and variety of rum in Puerto Rico. A frequent traveler to the United States, Ahmed has a knowledge of history and a mastery of a technique and tradition in the tasting and distillation of his premium spirit that make him a peerless expert on how best to enjoy Puerto Rican Rum, the island's proudest export.





After filtration, rum is aged in oak barrels.

DID YOU KNOW

According to the Adams Liquor Handbook, a highly regarded compendium of industry statistics, rum is growing at a faster rate than the distilled spirits category overall, and in the past two years rum has become the second largest spirit category.



RUM SANGRIA

— MAKES 1 —

- 1 oz. White Puerto Rican Rum
- ½ oz. Dark Aged Puerto Rican Rum
- ½ oz. triple sec
- 1 oz. orange juice
- ½ oz. pineapple juice
- ½ oz. grape juice
- ½ oz. passion fruit juice (optional)
- ½ oz. guava juice (optional)
- ½ oz. cranberry juice (optional)
- Splash of grenadine
- Fresh fruit for garnish: orange, lime, and apple slices, grapes, and cherries

In a mixing glass, combine all the juices, adding them one by one. Next, incorporate the Puerto Rican Rums and triple sec into the juices. Pour the mixture into a wine glass, add a splash of grenadine, and garnish with fresh fruits.

— RUMS OF PUERTO RICO BRANDS —

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For more information on Rums of Puerto Rico Brands, visit RUMCAPITAL.COM



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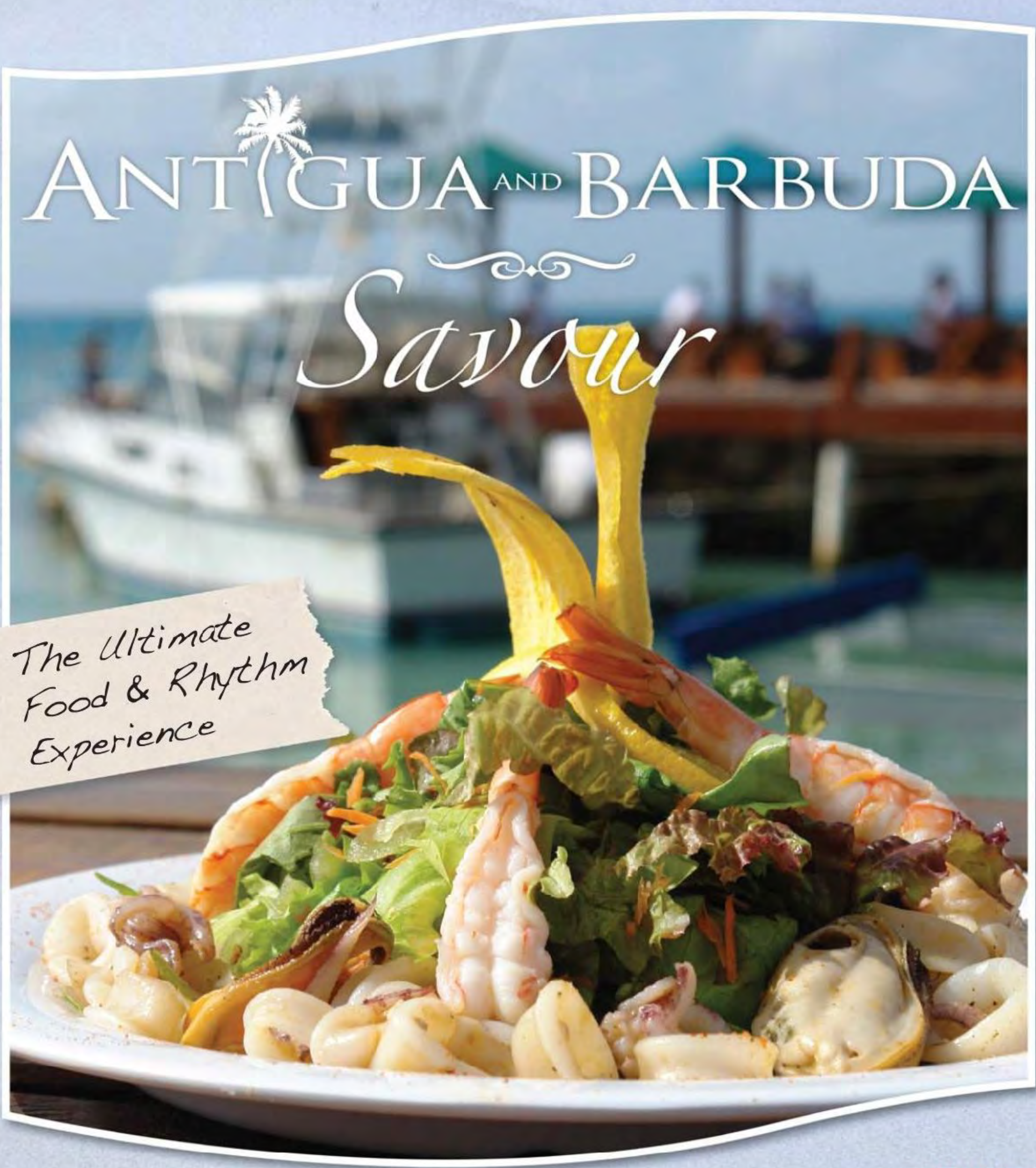
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KITCHEN

Discoveries and Techniques from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman



ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

Hooked on the Half Shell

"YOU'VE GOTTA TRY REDFISH on the half shell," my friend Drew Curren, a chef in Austin and an avid fisherman, told me over the phone one day when I mentioned that SAVEUR was doing a special Texas issue. I knew that redfish, also known as red drum, was a favorite on Southern tables, but the "half shell" part confused me. When he was a teenager, Drew said by way of explanation, he used to tag along with old salts on day-long fishing excursions in the bays and inlets of the Gulf Coast. "For dinner, these guys basically cut off a side of the fish, put it skin side down on the grill without even scaling it, and doused it in butter; by the time they set the table, the fish was done. It's that easy." The "half shell" was simply the fish's crisp, charred, scales-on skin.

I didn't try redfish on the half shell until I paid a visit to Reef, a restaurant in Houston helmed by chef Bryan Caswell, who also happens to know something about fishing in Texas. In his version (see page 50), a gorgeous, flaky filet is basted with compound butter; the "shell" captures the fish's juices, keeping the flesh moist. It gives fish cooked on the bone a run for its money.

The "half shell" technique is sometimes called "Chitimacha style", presumably after the way the Chitimacha Indians, expert fishermen who once lived in the region's bayous, grilled fish over coals. I've since found that other thick-scaled fish, such as red snapper and wild striped bass, also work fine on the half shell. So, Drew, thanks for the tip; I'm hooked. —*Hunter Lewis*



Big Heat, Small Package

THE CHILE PEQUÍN, a staple of Mexican cowboy cooking in Texas (see page 72), is the Lone Star State's only truly native chile. It grows wild in much of South Texas (as well as Central and South America) and is an essential ingredient in real Texas chili (see page 38). The tiny chile (which is available dried or fresh) possesses a potency belied by its size. It rates a whopping 75,000 Scoville heat units, as compared with a jalapeño's wimpy 4,000. In *The Great Chili Confrontation* (Trident Press, 1969), a lively history of Texas chili, H. Allen Smith described a chili made with chile pequín as being "so hot it will boil on a cold stove, and…rest on your stomach like a litter of angry wildcats". But this capsicum also has a complex floral and smoky citrus flavor. In a 1987 article on the chile pequín for *Texas Monthly* magazine, our friend Patricia Sharpe wrote that one of the best ways to eat a fresh one is simply to quarter it and place it atop a fried egg. Over the years, many Texas cooks have turned to milder jalapeños and anchos for their chilis and stews, but we think it's time for this tiny titan's comeback. (See THE PANTRY, page 108, for a source.) —*Ben Mims*

Shucking an Oyster

Here's how (see page 81 for a recipe for broiled oysters on the half shell).



1 Set the oyster on a kitchen towel to prevent it from slipping as you shuck.



2 Gripping the oyster firmly, insert the tip of an oyster knife into the hinge. Twist until the hinge breaks.



3 Draw the blade of the knife along the inside of the top shell to ease the shell up and off.



4 Run the blade along the middle of the top shell to sever the adductor muscle, which connects the shell to the oyster's flesh. Discard top shell.



5 Draw the blade along the bottom shell to free the flesh completely, being careful not to spill any of the briny liquid.



6 Use the tip of the oyster knife to remove any shards of shell that might have fallen onto the flesh.

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; ILLUSTRATIONS: BRENDA WEAVER


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KITCHEN



Good Beans

When we read the recipe for frijoles a la charra—*norteño*-style slow-simmered pinto beans—given to us by the Texas cookbook writer Melissa Guerra (see page 71), we did a double take. Guerra doesn't call for soaking the dried beans overnight, or even for an hour or two, before cooking them. Not only that, but her recipe also told us to add salt to the cooking water. We'd always honored the convention that dried beans should be soaked so that they soften before they're cooked, and we'd taken it on faith that salt in the cooking water will cause the beans to toughen. But when we went ahead and made the dish, the beans came out beautifully: plump, tender, and neither crunchy nor mushy.

Curious, we decided to experiment by varying Guerra's recipe. Here's what we found out: soaking dried beans overnight is fine, and even good, in that it reduces the cooking time by at least a quarter, but if you have the time for a longer simmer, then soaking isn't necessary. As for the quick-soaking method—i.e., bringing the beans to a boil and then letting them sit for an hour—we found that an hour in warm water made virtually no difference in the cooking time, so go for either the overnight soak or none at all. And the salt? Adding it didn't change the texture of the beans or alter the cooking time, so salt as freely as your taste dictates. A final revelation: for one version we tried, we removed the tomatoes and noticed that the beans cooked a lot faster. Acidic ingredients, it turns out, slow down the cooking process dramatically. Who knew? —*Carey Yorio*

All Steamed Up

FIRST SERVED AT ROUTH Street Cafe, in Dallas, in the late 1980s, chef Stephan Pyles's elegant tamale tart (see page 84 for the recipe) began as a baked dish: a soft corn masa shell topped with Pyles's signature venison chili (the dish was originally an homage to the humble, chili-topped Frito pie) and cooked in the oven. Over the decades, Pyles has refined the tart through trial and error and, in the process, brought it closer in spirit and practice to a traditional tamale. He ditched the oven for a steamer, which keeps the masa shell moist, and he sealed the tart in plastic wrap to mimic a tamale's corn husk cocoon. The steaming performs double duty: it helps the silky, savory garlic custard (which replaced the venison chili) to set gently, while also producing an especially tender tamale shell. Here's how it's done.



1 Spread a sheet of plastic wrap across the work surface and place the prepared masa shell on top of it. Pour in the custard.



2 Using a rubber spatula, gently distribute the pieces of roasted garlic in the custard, taking care not to damage the edges of the masa shell.



3 Pull the plastic wrap over the top of the tart, pressing it onto the custard to force out any air. Tuck the edges under the tart pan.



4 Transfer the tart to a bamboo steamer set inside a wide-bottomed pot filled with water by 1 inch; place pot over medium-high heat.



5 Secure the bamboo steamer's lid and reduce heat so the water stays at a simmer; cook until custard starts to set. Remove tart and unwrap it.



6 Let tart cool slightly; then cover the top of the tart evenly with the prepared crab mixture. Cut tart into wedges; serve warm.



Mr. Salsa Pace Picante Sauce, that supermarket staple, was the first salsa I ever ate, an experience that puts me in league with millions of Americans. These days, you can find all sorts of fresh and jarred salsas almost anywhere in the country, but back in 1947, when Louisiana native David E. Pace (pictured, left) concocted his condiment in the rented backroom of a liquor store in San Antonio, Texas, that wasn't the situation. His simple mix of cocked tomatoes, jalapeños, onions, garlic, and vinegar, which he originally dubbed Pace Picante Spanish Hot Sauce, came as a discovery for many home cooks unfamiliar with Tex-Mex cuisine. I still use Pace Picante as a dip for tortilla chips and, in a pinch, as a quick sauce for enchiladas or to brighten the flavor and enhance the color of a beef stew. —*Todd Coleman*

FROM TOP LEFT: MICHAEL KRAUS; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (6); COURTESY PACE FOODS

KITCHEN



Here's the Rub

SPICE RUBS, ALSO called dry rubs, are essential to Texas-style barbecued beef brisket (see page 58). Some rubs are a simple blend of salt and pepper; among the others are sugar and ground dried thyme, oregano, cumin, chiles, and paprika. "A rub is all we use—no sauces," says Keith Schmidt, the owner of Kreuz Market, a revered barbecue establishment in Lockhart, Texas, whose rub consists of nothing more than salt, pepper, and cayenne. Massaging a rub onto the surface of the meat the night before cooking will flavor it and, thanks to the salt in the mix, tenderize it. If you add sugar—brown, cane, and granulated beet sugars are all used—it will caramelize during cooking to produce a browned and deliciously toasty exterior, but even the simplest salt-and-pepper rubs form a savory crust, which makes for an appealing texture and seals in moisture. Dry rubs work beautifully on a well-marbled cut like brisket, which conducts the fat-soluble spice to its interior as it cooks. "Once the fat gets hot and fluid, the rub will permeate into the meat," says Schmidt. "It's integral to the flavor—you'd sure notice it if it wasn't there." —*H.L.*

FROM TOP: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; TODD COLEMAN

BARBECUE RUB

MAKES 3/4 CUP

- 1½ tbsp. kosher salt
- 1½ tbsp. dark brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. sweet paprika
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 tsp. mustard powder
- 1½ tsp. black pepper
- ½ tsp. ground coriander
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ½ tsp. dried thyme



Mix in a jar; store up to 6 months.

RECIPES & METHODS BY CATEGORY

APPETIZERS

MAIN DISHES

Meat and Poultry

Seafood

Vegetarian

SIDE DISHES

DRINKS

DESSERTS

MISCELLANEOUS

SAVEUR MENU

SAVEUR's guide to EVENTS, PROMOTIONS & PRODUCTS



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Chicken Biriyani with Saigon Cinnamon

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THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered food products and destinations too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY BEN MIMS

Fare

Visit the Finish Line Cafe (600 Main Street, Paradise; 940/969-2525) to try the **chicken fried steak**. The best version isn't on the menu; ask for Grandma Marie Brown's version, bathed in an eggy buttermilk batter, double-dredged in seasoned flour, and deep-fried. (The pan-fried steak is pretty darned good, too.) Stop by the **Spoetzl Brewery** (603 East Brewery Street, Shiner; 800/574-4637; www.shiner.com) to take a tour of the brewery and taste samples of its signature Shiner Bock, as well as a rotating list of anniversary and specialty beers.

Texas

For our favorite examples of Texas's cheese revolution, go to Houston Dairymaids (713/880-4800; www.houstondairymaids.com) for the Veldhuizen Family Farms **Redneck Cheddar** ($17 a pound), Pure Luck Dairy's **Sainte Maure** ($20 a pound), **Brazos Valley havarti** ($16 a pound), and the CKC Farms **baby blue** ($26 for a 2/3-pound round). Visit the Mozzarella Company (800/798-2954; www.mozzco.com) for its **Hoja Santa goat cheese** ($21 a pound) and **caciotta with ancho chile** ($7.45 a pound). Go to Castro Cheese (713/460-0329; www.castrocheese.com) for La Vaquita's **panela fresca** ($4.99 for a 12-ounce round; e-mail orders to buycheese@castrocheese.com). Call Licon Dairy (915/851-2705) for its **azaderos** ($3.50 for a 10-piece package). Visit MyRancher.com (903/455-4040; www.myrancher.com) for the Lucky Layla Farms **fresh campesino** ($5.25 for a 14-ounce package). To make the barbecued brisket, purchase a **Weber One Touch charcoal grill**, available at most hardware stores. For more information about grilling on your Weber grill, go to www.webernation.com. To purchase **mesquite lump charcoal** ($4.35 for an 8-pound bag) and **Texas mesquite chunks** ($3.55 for a 5-pound bag), contact B&B Charcoal Company (361/865-3444; www.bbcharcoal.com).

Recipes

To make the Mexican seafood cocktail, use a tomato–clam cocktail such as **Clamato**, available at Beverages and More! ($3.99 for 1 liter; 877/772-3866; www.bevmo.com). To purchase **live crawfish**, contact Louisiana Crawfish Company ($5.49 a pound for 10–14 pounds; 888/522-7292; www.lacrawfish.com). To make the red chile enchiladas, use dried red **new mexico chiles** ($8.18 for an 8-ounce bag), available at Pendery's World of Chiles and Spices (800/533-1870; www.penderys.com). To make the redfish on the half shell, purchase **boneless skin-on redfish**, **sea bass**, and **red snapper filets**, available from Louisiana Foods (800/799-3134; price varies by season). To make Sartin's "barbecued" crabs, purchase **Cajun seasoning** ($8.95 for a 14-ounce container; 409/548-2319; ask for owner Kim Tucker) from Sartin's Seafood Restaurant (3520 Nederland Avenue, Nederland; 409/721-9420; www.sartinsnederland.com). To make the tamale tart, use a **10" bamboo steamer** ($19.95), available at Sur La Table (800/243-0852; www.surlatable.com). To make Woody DeSilva's championship chili, use **dried chile pequín**, available at Pendery's ($5.73 for a 4-ounce bag of flakes; $15.00 for a 4-ounce bag of pods; see above). To make the tomato salsa, use Muir Glen **fire-roasted diced tomatoes** ($3.99 for a 28-oz. can), available in most local supermarkets and from Organic Direct (718/451-2828; www.organicdirect.com). To make the sautéed Chinese broccoli, purchase **gai lan**, available at Melissa's/World Variety Produce (price and availability vary by season; 800/588-0151; www.melissas.com). To make the agua de jamaica cocktail, use **dried hibiscus flowers**, available at Kalustyan's ($7.99 for an 8-ounce bag; 800/352-3451; www.kalustyans.com).

Texas Larder

Here are a few more iconic Texas products we found too good to pass up. The following staples are a must when you're stocking your Lone Star pantry, and most are available in your local supermarket.

Meyer's Elgin Hot Sausage The boldly seasoned pork links from Meyer's Elgin Smokehouse are the best in the state ($21.95 for a 3-pound package;



800/677-6465; www.cuetopiatexas.com).

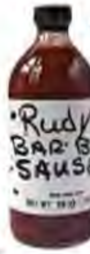
Rio Grande Valley Red Grapefruit Bright red and intensely sweet. Get them at Resaca Grove Farm ($21 for 10–12 fruits; 866/551-3771; www.lonestargrapefruit.com).



White Wings Flour Known in Texas for producing the best flour tortillas. Available from C. H. Guenther & Son, Inc. ($2.50 for a 5-pound bag; 800/531-7912; www.chguenther.com).



Rudy's BBQ "Sause" Our favorite Texas barbecue sauce, packed with pungent tamarind and chile flavor.



Available from Rudy's online ($6.49 for an 18-ounce bottle; 877/609-3337; www.rudysbbq.com).

Texmati Rice This Texas-grown basmati is prized for its pristine long grains and nutty flavor. Available from Rice Select ($13 for a package of four 14-ounce cartons; 800/232-7423; www.riceselect.com).



Talk O'Texas Okra Pickles Perfect for a barbecue platter or a bloody mary. Available from Talk O' Texas ($6.95 for a 16-ounce jar; 800/749-6572; www.talkotexas.com).



Ro*Tel This chile-tomato mix is essential for making chile con queso. Available from Southern Groceries ($1.99 for a 10-ounce can; 251/450-5043; www.southerngroceries.com).



JAMES OSELAND (7)

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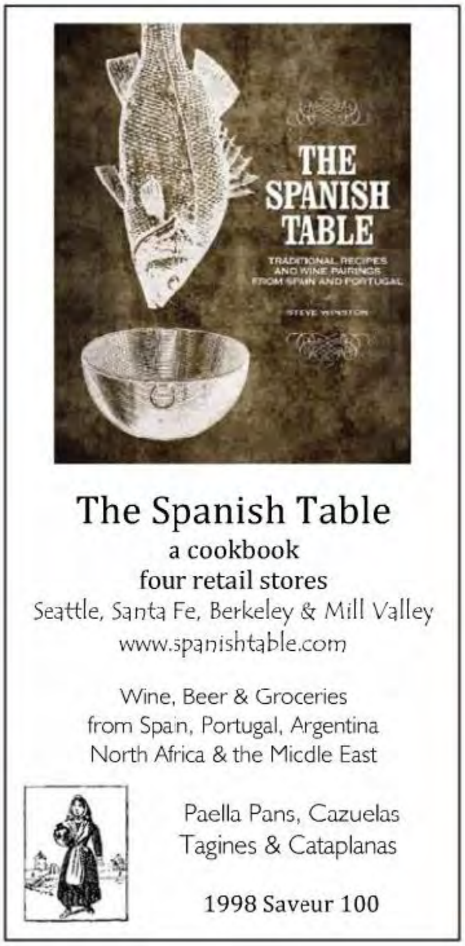

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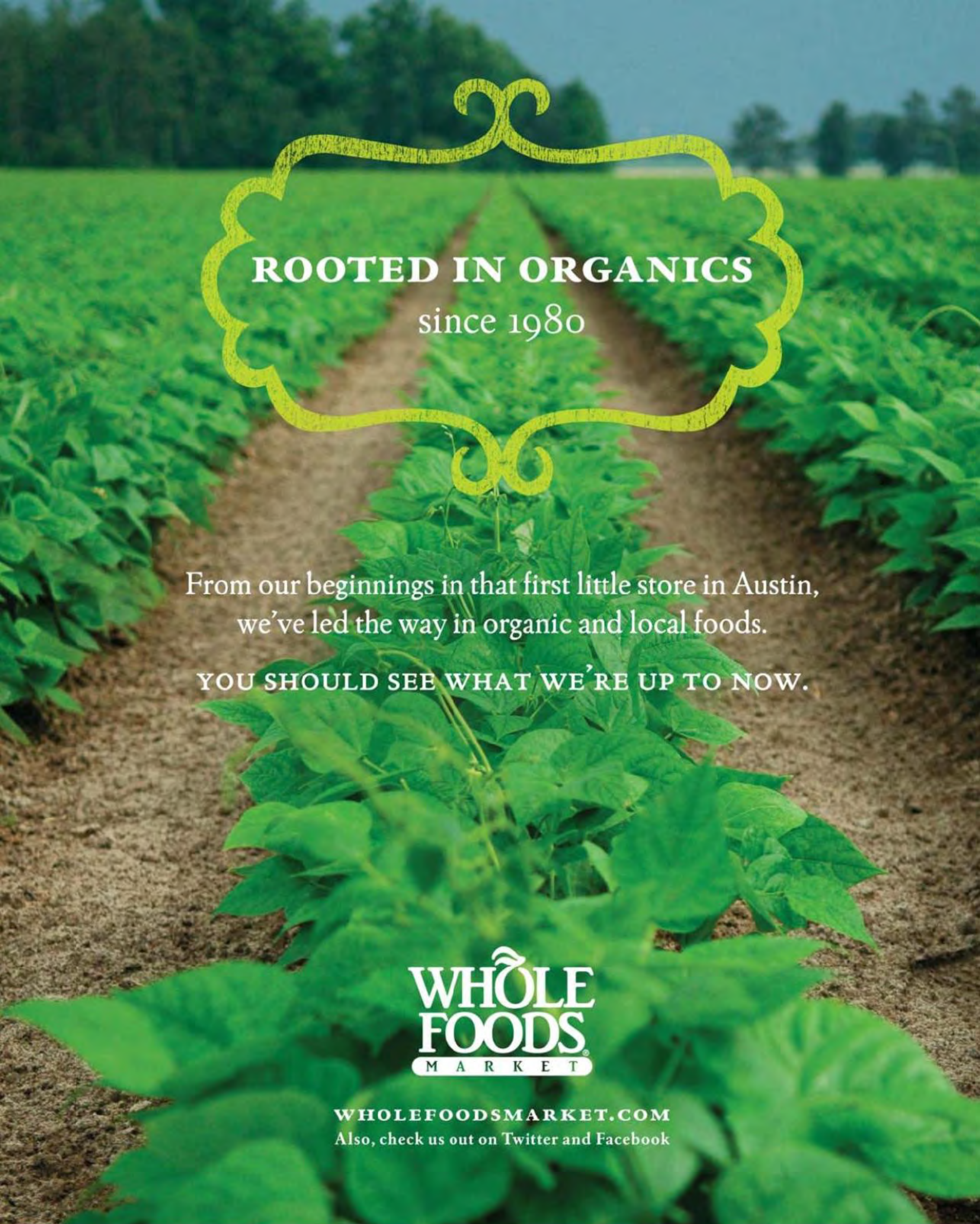


TIME 10:40 A.M., September 1, 1961

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